THE

FALL

OF

SCEPTICISM AND INFIDELITY

PREDICTED.

BRITISH MUSEUM

11649 f. 18

THE FALL OF SCEPTICISM AND INFIDELITY PREDICTED;

AN

EPISTLE TO DR. BEATTIE,

OCCASIONED BY HIS ESSAY ON THE NATURE AND IMMUTABILITY OF TRUTH.

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED, BY WAY OF NOTES,

DISSERTATIONS

ON SEVERAL METAPHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

What can reclaim you? Dare I hope profound
PHILOSOPHERS the converts of a SONG?

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

M DCC LXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE following Epiſtle (an additional Note or two excepted) was in its preſent ſtate in the year 1775; and being an effuſion of gratitude for the pleaſure the author received in peruſing an excellent book, it concurred with his views to wiſh it ſent to the preſs. They who are acquainted with this avenue of the Muſes, well know, that it is beſet with many difficulties, which a ſtranger to the road would ſcarcely gueſs, but of which it is not here neceſſary to enlarge. The intimation, however, will account for its delay; and what follows for its preſent appearance.

Of late the epiſtolary form of writing verſe has been much in vogue. Whether the poet have a friend to praiſe, a foe to

 ſatirize,

2 X

ſatirize, a country to deſcribe, a project to ridicule, or an art to teach, it muſt all be done through the medium of an epiſtle. Conſidering, then, that his performance bore the faſhionable title; that it had been read and approved by more than one of our firſt literary characters; and that (though the ſubjects of a Note or two are but for a day) the Work chiefly relates to topics of the moſt laſting and intereſting nature—the author was induced to make another trial to accompliſh his firſt deſign; which the reader ſees has been ſucceſsful.

Introduction into the world, however, is in any caſe of little account, compared with *reception* by it; and, ſhould the author's hopes in this reſpect prove *viſionary*, he will have the ſatisfaction (he may ſay the *ſolid* ſatisfaction) of having meant well in his intruſion. If the *Verſes* fail of conferring praiſe, they will manifeſt the deſire; and ſhould the *Notes* want force to rectify *one* notion in an ingenious and enquiring reader, he muſt ſtill think they teach nothing

thing that would in anywiſe injure the welfare of mankind.

Faſhion (which generally prevents all apology for its own obſervances) beſides adopting the epiſtolary form of verſe, has alſo ſanctioned the accompaniment of *long notes*; and if ever the union be proper (which the author is far from wiſhing to diſpute) it will be ſo in a poem where the ſubject is ſomething philoſophical as well as argumentative. In this caſe, as every part cannot be treated with equal preciſion, nor be allowed to attempt the minuteneſs and accuracy of a proſe diſſertation (and hence many things of conſequence to the ſubject muſt be only glanced at, or barely aſſerted) if a writer would be fully underſtood by the leſs experienced of his readers, it becomes neceſſary to ſupply what is wanting in the text, by a note or a reference. This Epiſtle (as to ſubject) has two things in view—to caution the young adventurer in philoſophy againſt the dangerous impoſitions of metaphyſical ſubtlety—and to impreſs on his mind a favourable idea of our moſt holy religion.

On whatever appears deficient in the firſt part of this deſign, he conſiders the well-known work which gave riſe to it as the beſt comment; but as to the latter, tho' he might have avoided the trouble of annotation by like references, the idea he had of modern reading induced him to accompany the text with ſome of its more neceſſary illuſtrations.

In the epiſtolary mode, the world has been favoured with ſome of the moſt finiſhed and regular didactic poems; and a living author, whoſe uncommon powers and fertility of mind equally charm and aſtoniſh us, has given this mode every currency which can be beſtowed upon it, by the joint effects of worth and faſhion. Something, therefore, more regularly *preceptive* than they contain might have been looked for in the following lines. But though, by going over a heap of *ſuch reading as is never read*, (down from the ancient ſophiſts, through the late ſchoolmen, to the preſent metaphyſicians) one *might* have collected ſeveral characters and opinions, which in ordinary verſe would have

have formed a rather curious exhibition, the writer felt no inclination to go beyond the firſt obvious ſuggeſtions of his Muſe, and run the *hazard* of wholly overcoming his reader's patience, while he was enlarging the number of his lines; and of fatiguing that attention in the firſt part of his Work, which he particularly wiſhed to be carried into the ſecond. He preſumes, that an epiſtle is right as to plan, if what it contains be but *pertinent* to its ſubject. *Completeneſs*, either in matter or arrangement, is not of its eſſence; and whether it be long or ſhort, regular or irregular, its chief merits muſt be tried by a teſt, which is eaſier to feel than critically explain.

But a circumſtance we have availed ourſelves of in theſe apologies may yet entangle us in difficulties, and require a new one.—If, it may be ſaid by an objector, a reaſon for this publication be drawn from the ſimilitude of its *form* to that of the productions of the great poetic luminary pointed out above, ſhould not a recollection of their *worth* have been a

motive for its ſuppreſſion?—This would in truth be a queſtion of weight, were poetry a buſineſs of mere *rivalry*, and reading limited to what *excels*. Could this SUN of Genius enlighten the *whole* Parnaſſian world of letters, the ſiderial hemiſphere would indeed be uſeleſs to the literary traveller; but as, from the laws of nature, he cannot diffuſe his beams over more than *half* of it, we ought to conſider, that the twinklings of a *ſtar* may not only benefit a wanderer's feet, but be viewed by him with pleaſure, remembered with gratitude, and named with praiſe.

January, 1784.

CON-

CONTENTS.

THE EPISTLE - - Page 1

SUBJECTS OF THE NOTES.

NOTE Page

I. *On the Being of a God* - - 27
II. *On the Neceſſity of a Revelation* 34
III. *On the Reaſons we have to believe the Chriſtian Revelation true* - - - 44
IV. *On the Efficacy of Faith* - 51
V. *That a Propenſity to believe in Revelation is no Impediment to our judging properly of its Truth* - - - - - - - 57
VI. *That Deiſtical Writings have been fully refuted; with a ſhort Anſwer to ſome of their moſt common Objections* - 67
VII. *On the Pleaſures which Religious Studies are capable of yielding to the Ingenious* - 84
VIII. *What at preſent moſt prevents the Progreſs of Religion* - 96

POST-

CONTENTS.

POSTSCRIPT I.

Note		Page
IX.	*Remarks on Dr. Prieſtley's Examination of the Drs. Reid, Beattie, and Oſwald* - -	112
X.	*That Mankind are endued with certain innate practical Principles* - - - - - - -	132

POSTSCRIPT II.

XI.	*Obſervations reſpecting Dr. Prieſtley's Diſquiſitions on Matter and Spirit, Liberty and Neceſſity* - - - -	143

THE

THE FALL OF SCEPTICISM AND INFIDELITY PREDICTED.

AN EPISTLE TO DR. *BEATTIE.*

WHEN in ſome pleaſing innocent deſign
The bright effects of parts ſuperior ſhine,
Simply for this the *judgment* willing pays
A due proportion'd recompence of praiſe:
But when beyond ſuch aim, to nobleſt uſe,
To man's beſt hopes their efforts fair conduce;
When at a time moſt needful they appear
To check ſome potent evil's dread career,
The *breaſt* with zeal aſſiſts the grateful cauſe,
And yields our fulleſt tribute of applauſe.

Such, BEATTIE, thy fair volume, ſuch the meed
Thy worth demands, and virtue has decreed;
A *work*, where, mix'd with all the charms of art,
We feel the influence of the pureſt heart;
A *meed*, which, as it from affection ſprings,
Outſhines the moſt reſplendent gifts of kings.
Yet when a virtuous Prince, in merit's choice,
With lib'ral hand approves the public voice,
In one fair wreath of animating glow
Is gather'd all encomium can beſtow.

Conſcious, with thee, how much the wrangler's rage
Of late has injur'd Truth's momentous page,
And fond to trace—(what cannot Hope eſſay!)
Her better fortunes in ſome future day;
(So for a moment each ſad fear beguile,
Which wakes for Virtue and this giddy iſle)
A ſtranger Muſe attunes her humble lyre,
And aſks thy ear to what thy themes inſpire.

Bold

Bold the requeſt! Yet ſhould the trivial ſtrain
From nobler views thy active mind detain;
Though new ESSAYS a while forget their foes,
And other MINSTRELS from freſh plaudits pauſe;
Though Art nor Melody inform the line,
Nor Fancy's hand delineate the deſign,—
If right thy boſom through thy page is ſhewn,
For all defects the purpoſe will atone.
Then deign to ſmile; forgive the humble lyre,
And lend thy ear to what thy themes inſpire.

Of all the various op'nings, which we find
To baffle Truth, and cheat the ingenuous mind,
The native gloom of metaphyſic fields
The ampleſt ſcope for ſuch impoſture yields.
For, as in twilight dim ſome ſtranger ſwain,
His journey urging o'er the glimm'ring plain,
Merely through weakneſs in the guiding ray,
Miſtakes the duſky objects of his way;

One thing another ſeems, and woods and hills
Are clouds or hamlets, juſt as Fancy wills.
But if to ſuperſtitious whimſies prone,
Some phantom dread uſurps fair Reaſon's throne;
His judgment farther ſwerves, till by degrees
A goblin frowns in ev'ry buſh he ſees:
So here, a novice finds the ſhadowy train,
Thoſe ghoſtly forms which deck abſtraction's plain,
Flit through appearances, and take new names,
As vague opinion ſhifts its varying aims.
Yet moſt ſuch Proteus images betray,
Where Syſtem ſpreads its bold creative ſway; *
Her witchcraft aiding, frequently we find
Fair Truth itſelf the bugbear of the mind.
Hence tyro-wits, of honeſty and head,
In abſtract walks, are eaſily miſled,
Nor always find, the phantom they purſue
" Will like the ſhadow prove the ſubſtance true."

* See Note XI. at the End.

Hence oft, through ſome peculiar taint of brain,
To ſerve ſome end as culpable as vain,
Opinions fatal to each heart-felt joy,
Theories abſurd as weakneſs could employ,
Have been ſupported, by no common names,
With ev'ry art inſidious error claims.
Have been ſupported! Yes, and (ſuch the aid
Falſe reas'ning gains from metaphyſic ſhade,
So deep are ſophiſts oft with folly ſmit,
Sprung from their own dear ſubtilty of wit)
Have been believ'd, where creeds and axioms plain
Met nought but cavil, or avow'd diſdain.

Is there an atheiſt much be-harm'd in head,
A quibbling infidel, a ſceptic dread,
A clerk, foredoom'd the peſt of common-ſenſe,
Who pants for wrangling more than pounds and pence?
Is there, who, anxious for no vulgar praiſe,
With deſp'rate quill muſt needs make vile *eſſays?*

All fly to METAPHYSICS; all diſcloſe
Its deepeſt ſubtilties to aid their cauſe.*
There, Indian like, throughout the paths of night,
With teazing ambuſcades they urge the fight;
Nor yield the theme while logomachy's ground
Affords one hope to harraſs or confound.

But do theſe facts impeach great Reaſon's voice?
Shall Truth deſpair, and Sceptic-wit rejoice?
If ſophiſts, from each call of conſcience freed,
Pervert a myſtic ſcience to miſlead;
If, like the tinkling in an idiot's ear,
What theory thinks ambiguous terms appear,

* PARODY of theſe Lines of *POPE*.

Is there a Parſon, much bemus'd in beer,
A maudlin Poeteſs, a rhyming Peer,
A Clerk, foredoom'd his father's ſoul to croſs,
Who pens a ſtanza, when he ſhould *engroſs*?
Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, ſcrawls
With deſp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls?
All fly to TWIT'NAM, and in humble ſtrain
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.

Epiſtle to Dr. ARBUTHNOT.

And,

And, leſs inſpir'd with candour than with pride,
Some judge amiſs, can none the point decide?
Yes, howſoe'er theſe err, and others doubt,
Truth ſtill is Truth, and man may find it out;
At leaſt what's uſeful,—hence the ſacred ray,
Which ſhews life's goal, and lights us on the way.*
As nature in the human frame ſupplies
A copious range of varying ſtrength and ſize,
Yet, if complete, the leaſt and weakeſt find
They're not debarr'd the functions of mankind;
Thus 'tis with reaſon: though its pow'rs we ſee,
From various cauſes, differ in degree;
Yet, ſound their faculties, however ſmall,
Truth's needful part is in the reach of all;
A little toil ſoon brings the gem to light,
Where common ſenſe and honeſty unite.

To conquer ſcience, and each truth explain
In ev'ry region of its wide domain,

* See NOTE III.

Parts are not all. As of peculiar kind,
They aſk peculiar faculties of mind.
By ſyllogiſtic ſteps ſome reach their goal;
On ſimple feeling others reſt the whole;
Hence, as their proofs from logic ſtrict recede,
What is deduc'd muſt greater caution need;
(For more we verge on faith, and human ties,
The more may error cheat us in diſguiſe);
Yet here, where prejudice is fatal found,
And wrong affections render all unſound;
Where candour, more than ſkill, aſſiſts the cauſe,
And from the heart the chief illation flows;
Here Science ſmiles,—her truths, howe'er refin'd,
Convince, illume, nor ſhun the well-form'd mind.—
Thus, not an art but yields ſome uſeful light;
In Truth's fair cauſe, thus all their beams unite;
Thus METAPHYSICS boaſt a genuine ray,
Refine our knowledge, and augment its day.

'Tis true, when Sophiſtry performs her part
In ſome nice problem of this nicer art,

Not ev'ry one can ſee the ſly deceit,
And fix the point where Truth and Falſehood meet;
But fewer ſtill the ſovereign powers diſcloſe
To ſcan with eaſe, and energy expoſe;
To bring each juſt concomitant to view,
And for the falſe, produce the ſmother'd true;
Then on the mind the ſtriking whole impreſs
In all the fair embelliſhments of dreſs.
Yet this thy happy talent! this the might,
Late put one hardy Sophiſter to flight,
Chear'd many a candid mind with doubts oppreſs'd,
And lent new ſunſhine to Religion's breaſt.

Proceed, great ſage; in this good work proceed,
Expoſe more HUMES, and hallowed be the deed!
Hark! REID* and OSWALD† ſounding with applauſe
Th' inſpiring call to this important cauſe;

Then

* Dr. *Reid*, author of "*An Enquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Senſe*;" a work of ſingular merit and philoſophical

Then urge the charge, till each apoſtate page
Feel the keen vigour of thy honeſt rage,
And arts perverted yield the vain pretence
To cope with truths made known by common ſenſe. ‡

Unhappy Britain! o'er whoſe bounteous plains,
In lovelieſt ſmiles benignant Science reigns;
Where Arts their faireſt prototypes ſupply,
And Wiſdom's volume courts each candid eye;
Where Genius, rear'd in Freedom's foſtring arms,
Illumes each grove with more than Attic charms:
Yet dup'd by fancy, fond to be admir'd,
Corrupt in faith, or with ſome demon fir'd,

phical reſearch, and worthy of the peruſal of every one, who is deſirous of being acquainted with the ſubject on which he treats.

† Dr. *Oſwald*, author of "*An Appeal to Common Senſe in Behalf of Religion.*" In this well-written performance (interſperſed with much ſound reaſoning againſt the prevailing Scepticiſm) the reader will find a deal of valuable matter relating to the controverſy mentioned in the IXth of the following NOTES.

‡ See NOTE IX.

Unable

Unable in the honeſt walks of fame
To teach mankind, and fix a ſhining name,
Full oft ſome bold licentiate hails the crowd,
And fearleſs vents his blaſphemies aloud.
Fearleſs indeed! For what ſhould raiſe a fear,
Where prepoſſeſſion lends a willing ear?
Where all that's new, and ſmart, and bold, and odd,
Howe'er injurious to themſelves, or God,
Too frequent meets, in plenitude of praiſe,
The ſtateſman's ſanction, and the mob's huzzas.

Yes, though it wounds me to adjuſt theſe rhymes,
Full well they mark one feature of the times.
For deep immers'd in wealth's luxurious bane,
Too far commix'd with "trade's unfeeling train;"
Of ſome wild whim eternally in queſt,
Prone to conceive religion as a jeſt;
By faſhion led, of ſober thinking tir'd,
Enſlav'd to pleaſure, and by faction fir'd;
No wonder o'er this faſcinated land
That vice and folly hold ſupreme command;

That none can be more anxious to deceive,
Than crowds are fitly modell'd to believe.

Such Britain now, a ſtrange miſguided throng,
Too verſatile to prize e'en bleſſings long.
Yet ever bent to act ſome ſhining part,
And erring more through vanity than art,
With ſenſe, that would become a nation's pride
Improv'd aright, and ſoberly apply'd;
And happy ſtill in many a zealous name,
Religion's honour, and ſound learning's fame;—
Fain would the ſanguine Muſe foreſee remov'd
Each baneful failing, and each worth improv'd;
An age commence more bright than that of gold,
So fondly fabled by the bards of old;
Meek reaſon's age, when, from vain paſſions freed,
Each Chriſtian acts a *ſhining part* indeed.

Though from the darkſome tenour of the ſtrain
Hopes, ſuch as theſe, no flatt'ring luſtre gain,

Some

Some facts illume the Muſe's Delphic eye,
Whoſe influence ſpeaks the happy proſpect nigh.

As in life's morning, noon, and night we find
Three diff'rent tempers actuate the mind;
A *youth* of eaſy faith, and judgment weak,
That feels true wiſdom in another ſpeak;
A *manhood* vain, that ſcorns to think a thought,
By mobs believ'd, and bigot doctors taught;
An *age*, which owns thoſe truths have beſt pretence
To common uſe, that ſpring from common ſenſe:
So, when matur'd, our ſtudious nights peruſe
Some moral topic in its nicer views;
With like ſucceſs a three-fold race we run,
And find opinion end where it begun.
And ſo the world, where faith her light ſupplies,
Has been through different tempers growing wiſe;
And well obſerv'd its firſt and ſecond ſtage,
Analogy with eaſe predicts its AGE.

When

When new to moral and religious laws,
From ſimple feeling man's beſt knowledge roſe:
If this approv'd, how far ſoe'er from ſight
The latent ſource, they own'd the verdict right.
Docile along life's humble vale they trod,
Nor fear'd the path which firſt reveal'd their God. *
And when from rectitude they ſwerv'd aſide,
'Twas paſſion urg'd, and not refining pride;
(Some *Dagon* tempting with corporeal charms,
The luſts of ſloth, or wantonneſs of arms)
From pious faith their grave inſtruction mov'd,
And heav'n in viſions bleſs'd the faith it lov'd.

But older grown, and near theſe latter times,
(As if preſcription half abſolv'd our crimes)
See man in ſenſual habits more deprav'd,
To more alarming vanities enſlav'd!
Now, ere he own his native feelings true,
Each learn'd credential muſt be brought in view.

* See Note I.

"No"—(thus he argues)— "let it ne'er be ſaid,
I live by faith;—'tis treaſon to the head."
What ſyllogiſtic mediums can't diſcloſe
I ſcorn to own, the code of moral laws.
Shall I, on truſt, as did weak wits of old,
Theſe bigot inſtincts as ſound maxims hold,
And thus a pure ſcholaſtic conſcience ſhock?
Forbid it Reaſon, and forbid it LOCKE! *
Hence logic is the word, to work he flies;
Here ſtand his *whereſores*, there his truſty *whys*;
Straight all his learned duſt, and round his head
A dark refracting atmoſphere is ſpread
Till what's within reſembling what's without,
He ſees no truth, that's not involv'd in DOUBT;
Till folly, by ſome bolder impulſe mov'd,
Diſtruſts its own exiſtence, while unprov'd,
And, all bewilder'd in the bootleſs plan,
He makes a *ſceptic*—what God made a *man*.
Then, ſure as pride was e'er misfortune's mother,
And one extreme prov'd parent of another,

* See Note X.

To

To atheiſt or free-thinker next he turns,
And for his cauſe with no ſmall ardour burns.
His anti-creed now form'd, all *doubt* is fled,
And up ſtarts dogmatizing in its ſtead;
For no religion, yet for human weal
He cries aloud with moſt prepoſterous zeal;
Till FAITH deſpis'd, her ſiſter HOPE retires,
And life's beſt comfort through his pride expires.

RELIGION! heav'nly gift! the wiſe man's theme,
Affliction's ſolace, and our good ſupreme,
The needful guide, where Reaſon's glimm'ring light
But little ſhews, nor oft that little right.*
The ſtar, which leads to happineſs unknown,
And gives that Faith its play to which we're prone;†
To Hope's bright wing unwearied ſtrength ſupplies,
And lands fair Virtue in her kindred ſkies.
Dear hapleſs fair! though long to inſult born,
Alike the rake's, the fop's, the witling's ſcorn,

* See Note II. † See Note V.

And

And theirs, who, turning ſcience from its end,
Make that a foe, which nature meant a friend;
Tho' long thy ſufferings, much thy truths oppos'd,
Soon ſhall thy patient warfare now be clos'd.
Yes, truſt the Muſe, not only ſcap'd the darts
Thus foully urg'd from all inferior arts,
But (foil'd by thy impenetrable ſhield)
*Philoſophy** itſelf declines the field,
(That art beyond all other arts refin'd,
The laſt proud engine of th' apoſtate mind)
A little time muſt now o'erwhelm thy foes,
And heap deſerv'd abhorrence on their cauſe.
Soon ſhall converted wit (as wiſdom now)
Grant faith's chief knowledge may attend the plough;
That all true ſcience, learning's nobleſt ſtore,
Whate'er the ſage in nature can explore,
If ſcann'd aright, illuſtriouſly combine,
To prove thy page momentous and divine.

* The *Metaphyſical* part of it is here more particularly meant.

Then ev'ry art, perverſion at an end,
Shall with the warmeſt zeal become thy friend,
And Britain, where their luſtre ſhines ſupreme,
In nobleſt proofs her ſullied faith redeem.
For, as when ſome projectile's rapid courſe
Meets the firm rock ſuperior to its force,
Rebounding with like energy of ſpeed
It ſeeks the place from whence it firſt was freed;
So all refinement, wit's moſt rare ſupplies,
Launch'd at th' eternal mandates of the ſkies,
Their object reach'd, ſoon find the impulſe vain,
And glad return to greet plain ſenſe again.

As this predicts, already dim deſcry'd
We ſee deiſtic hardineſs ſubſide.*
Riſe then, ye few o'er moral conduct plac'd,
Improv'd with letters, or by ſtation grac'd,
Ye who (unmindful how a mob might rave)
Would bleſs your fellows, and your country ſave,

* See Note VIII.

Ye real patriots!—aid the dawning day,
And drive apoſtate darkneſs far away.
See all around conſpiring with the aim,
The nicer feelings move our ſoften'd frame;
See Nature's ſimpleſt maxims guide each art,
And ills tranſmitted meliorate the heart;
See pious gifts for half our pride atone,
And Virtue beam conſpicuous from the throne;
While to our hands with all the force of ſenſe,
All learning gives, or manly eloquence,
Our fires have ſolv'd each irreligious plea,*—
Could they that urge them aught but cavils ſee!
Join then your influence, teach mankind how vain
The fondeſt joy mortality can gain;
Aſſail each error, till the ſacred page,
As hope's beſt treaſure, man's chief thoughts engage;
Till all agree, in wrangling's keeneſt ſpite,
That faith is reaſon, when expounded right;†

* See NOTE VI. † See NOTE IV.

Till meek-eyed Peace, the ſweet regards of love,
This vale deſpis'd, affections plac'd above,
Leave Time but one more effort to unfold
The bleſs'd *Millennium* of the ſaints foretold.

Thrice happy period, and thrice happy they,
Who then experience life's more ſober day!
When modes factitious ceaſe, and once again
In ſimpleſt guiſe the rural manners reign;
Pride has no ſanction, and, as Virtue's trade,
Man wields his old primeval crook and ſpade.
When changeful Taſte, each vainer ſcience paſt,
On fair Religion turns her eye at laſt, *
And feels, and owns Redemption's grand deſign
With higheſt wiſdom, as with goodneſs ſhine.
See then, like age from youthful ferments freed,
In placid flow man's temp'rate hours ſucceed;
(His mind illum'd with wiſdom's gath'ring flames,
As blooms the ſoil his induſtry reclaims;)

* See Note VII.

See

See, as his paſſport to a happier land,
The ſacred ſcroll ſtill open in his hand;
See pious faith its chearing truths diſplay;
See patriarch rapture commune by the way;
See prayer and praiſe their holy warmth diffuſe,
And hope's high tranſports hourly wake the Muſe:
The Muſe, which then with Fancy's chaſteſt fire
Shall glance through nature, and attune the lyre.
Hark! from yon glade, with rocks fantaſtic crown'd,
How echo talks! what dulcet warblings ſound!
Soft beat the tuneful notes, and e'en to pain
The long, long viſta meliorates the ſtrain.
Whate'er of magic hangs o'er antique tales,
The dreams of genius in Arcadian vales,
All thoughts ſublime, through worlds of ſcience dart,
The ſong ſuggeſts ſupremely to the heart.
But ſee, the ſhadowy grove its bard diſcloſe,
See, from thy *Minſtrel* all this warbling flows.
See too Simplicity convene around
The Rural Joys, to hail th' endearing ſound;

While from her turf-built throne applauſive ſmiles
Light the laſt op'ning of the verdant iſles,
And thus (enraptur'd with her growing ſway)
In Delphic praiſe ſhe conſecrates the lay;
"While verſe has charms, or lore and genius ſhine,
The groves ſhall echo with theſe ſtrains divine."

Thrice happy days! (believe the advent near)
To laws, to truth, to candour hourly dear:
When no more PYRRHOS with quaint doubts confound,
Nor EPICURUS ſpreads debauch around,
No impious TINDAL ſacred writ blaſphemes,
Nor HUMES perplex with metaphyſic themes:
But ſtill, as public peſts, to public ſhame
Coercive manners give each baneful name.

Thrice happy days! ('tis hope that whiſpers here)
To virtue, worth, religion hourly dear:
When from the prince to him who digs the mine,
The living laws of fair example ſhine,

And

And preachers, patriots, parents zealous ſtrive
To keep each ſalutary truth alive:
When, ſpite of wit's pretence, and pride's award,
The Chriſtian virtues gain the firſt regard;
All Reaſon's friends her genuine æra ſee,
Nor think on TRUTH, but ſtill remember THEE.

NOTES

TO THE

FOREGOING

EPISTLE.

The knowledge of man is as the waters; ſome deſcending from above, and ſome ſpringing from beneath; the one informed by the light of Nature, the other inſpired by Divine Revelation.

BACON's Advancement of Learning.

*** For the ſake of giving theſe NOTES a better connection among themſelves, if read in ſucceſſion, they are ranged in an order different from that in which they occur in the Text.

NOTES.

NOTE I.

ON THE BEING OF A GOD.

Line 222.

Nor fear'd the path which firſt reveal'd their God.

THERE are two ways in which mankind may come at the knowledge of a Supreme Firſt Cauſe, or of God. The one is by a direct revelation from himſelf; the other is from the manifeſtations we have of him in his works. Of the former of thoſe modes we may obſerve, that, in order to propagate the tenet, they to whom the revelation was originally made, muſt have believed the veracity of their ſenſes, and the poſſibility

bility of their being fully ſatisfied (from the nature of the heavenly credentials) that they were not under the influence of any deception. Reſpecting others who were not thus favoured, (and which of courſe is the caſe of the generality of mankind) their belief in ſuch revelation muſt be founded in their opinion of the veracity and judgment of thoſe to whom it was firſt communicated, or of thoſe who had handed it abroad, or along the ſucceeding generations. That is, in the latter of theſe caſes, men's belief of the revelation in queſtion, muſt be governed by their belief in human teſtimony.

To the learned and contemplative, the argument for the being of a God, derived from the wiſdom, power, *&c.* manifeſted in the creation, is indeed clear and powerful, however we conceive of its baſis; whether (as ſome ſay) we ought to deem the ſimple inference which it contains, *real reaſoning*, or only (as others repreſent it) *the ſuggeſtion of common ſenſe* *. But with

* Of the latter of theſe opinions are the Drs. *Reid*, *Beattie*, and *Oſwald*; of the former, their opponent Dr.

with the ignorant and inconſiderate, experience, I think, will ſhew us, that it has not the weight ſome might be apt to imagine it ſhould have. When they allow the truth of ſuch an inference reſpecting God, they do it implicitly on the general conſent of mankind, and the faith they have in the penetration and judgment of others, rather than on any demonſtrable force they perceive in the deduction. To ſolve the appearances of things, they have, for the moſt part, a ſtrong propenſity to fly to their native energies; ſome *natural* or *mechanical* law, rather than to a *living* intelligent cauſe. It is only at times, and in chance individuals, that they can really pierce beyond the curtain of

Dr. *Prieſtley.* Perhaps in ſtrictneſs this argument is a ſpecies of *analogical reaſoning*, founded on experience. But it is ſo *ſimple* in itſelf, and in *mature* life is become ſo obvious and familiar to us, that there can be no harm, in their repreſenting it as a *ſuggeſtion of common ſenſe*; a ſuggeſtion it appears to be, however, which (as we go on to intimate) in different minds will always be attended with more or leſs conviction, according to their *ſtrength of feeling*, *kind of temper*, and *knowledge of things*.

ſenſe, and ſatisfactorily *ſee* and *feel*, by the help of their *own* faculties, that this fair frame of things muſt be the workmanſhip of an infinitely wiſe and powerful Being.

On this account, the kind of proof in queſtion (or the *feeling* on which it moſt apparently reſts) is capable of being much ſtrengthened by a perſon's own frequent contemplation, but more eſpecially by the documents of others, who are well read in the numberleſs inſtances of divine wiſdom and power daily exhibited in us, and around us. The *feeling* itſelf, however, there is reaſon to believe, does not ſo much depend upon argument and information, as upon a happy temperature of mind, and rectitude of reflection; in which, though there may be nothing truly caſual, there may be ſomething, which every man at all times cannot be certain of poſſeſſing. Indeed, to believe in a God merely as a *fact* (independent of regular proof) there ſeems to be an original *bias* in human nature. To this bias *revelation* and *tradition* aptly apply; and on theſe grounds alone appears to reſt, that *full*, *unfailing*, and *univerſal* belief

which the world at large has ever had of a Supreme Firſt Cauſe.

Of the other proceſſes of reaſoning by which a Deity may be proved, we need not here take any notice, as they are only to be underſtood and examined by the learned and ingenious.

From this repreſentation it follows, that, ſaving the *ſage* verſed in learned reſearch, or the *prophet* who is favoured with revelation, there are not many who can in ſtrictneſs have any other than an implicit knowledge of the being of a God, or one that reſts upon their belief of the *abilities*, *judgment*, and *veracity* of others; their abilities to inveſtigate the truth, their judgment to prevent ſuperſtitious impoſition, and their veracity to report truly the reſulting facts.

And from this account, alſo, it appears, that wherever there are theſe dependences there *may* be deceptions, and that *prejudice*, either for or againſt either of theſe *mediums*, may conſiderably augment or diminiſh their effect. On ſeveral accounts, then, they can neither of them be attended with *irreſiſtible* evidence. And hence it

it is, that the enemies of religion find ſo many openings to object to its authenticity. But hence, too, let us remember, the conſiderate believer is prepared to expect, that theſe erroneous and impious attacks, would put on juſt the ſame *barely plauſible* and *truly ſophiſtical* appearances, with which he always finds them accompanied.

The concluſion of the whole, therefore, juſtifies what is intimated in the text, that our belief of a revelation from God reſpecting our duties to him and one another, is, with the *multitude*, of the ſame ſpecies of belief, which has reference to his exiſtence; and hence, as to mankind *in general*, it may be truly ſaid, that every thing which has reſpect to *Religion* is founded on *Faith*.

There is no real neceſſity to introduce the ſubject here, but I cannot but glance at it a little, by remarking, that of the two methods above-mentioned of gaining a knowledge of God; that is, immediate revelation from the Deity himſelf, and argumentative deductions from the nature of his works, that the firſt provides a conducting

ducting clue, which will prevent every ſpecies of miſtake in our reference to the *Firſt Cauſe*; but that the other is liable to lead to the groſſeſt miſapplications, ſimilar to thoſe of the ancient heathens. This might be eaſily ſhewn by a formal ſcrutiny into their notions, and the nature of *nominal* and *perſonal* preciſion, as we may call it. And if this be allowed us, it then follows, that the *kind* of faith which we place in *Jeſus Chriſt* (and which ultimately reſts on revelation and human teſtimony) is the beſt adapted for *every* purpoſe or particular of religion, and what therefore cannot be derided by the deiſt, but manifeſtly at the expence of his own principles.

NOTE II.

ON THE NECESSITY OF A REVELATION.

Lines 265, 266.

The needful Guide, where Reaſon's glimm'ring light
But little ſhews, nor oft that little right.

THE celebrated and equally important queſtion, Whether unaſſiſted reaſon can ſatisfactorily diſcover our duty to God, or how we muſt render him an acceptable worſhip and ſervice? I ſhould imagine would meet with an eaſy ſolution in the negative from every knowing and unprejudiced perſon.

Where we have an intimate knowledge of the nature of any ſubject of enquiry, it is not difficult for an improved underſtanding clearly to diſcover certain laws and relations, which may obtain among its parts. But where one of theſe parts is very imperfectly known, it is as eaſy to ſee, that, through this ignorance, the relations betwixt it and the other parts cannot

not be inveſtigated, ſo as to remove all ſuſpicion of error and miſtake. Thus, it muſt be acknowledged, that, becauſe we are well acquainted with the ſubjects to which they belong, the moral habitudes between man and man, and the ſcientific properties of matter, may be diſcovered by us ſo far, as is ſerviceable in the ordinary purpoſes of life. But when we compare ourſelves with the Author of all things, a frail, material creature with a perfect, ſpiritual, ſelf-exiſtent being; what we in part know very well, with what on the whole (without revelation I preſume) we are extremely ignorant of, the hazard of miſtake in the moſt elaborate and refined inveſtigation of their related laws (however they might gain our ſpeculative attention) is too great to allow them our hearty and unſuſpicious belief. For well as we think we know one another, we are often miſtaken in our opinion of the reception a piece of officiouſneſs will meet with from the perſon it was intended to pleaſe. How then can we, with any certainty of a gracious eye and ear,

make our *ſelf-invented* religious tenders before a being of ſuch tranſcendent myſteriouſneſs and perfection?

After we are in poſſeſſion of the knowledge of a God, the only thing that the light of nature can teach us reſpecting our conduct towards him, is, that it is our duty to yield him every act of honour and obedience, which we are aſſured would pleaſe him, or that he might vouchſafe to require *. But what theſe acts ought to be, it ſeems utterly and wholly impoſſible for us to determine with *certainty*. We may *gueſs* indeed from ſome analogies of things, ſome relations among men, and from our inherent imbecilities, &c. that ſuch and ſuch obſervances of a religious kind would be proper for us to offer, and

* Thus much nature will evidently dictate. But if the *mode* of this honour and obedience were as evident as the neceſſity of the things themſelves, our modern free-thinkers would not have been ſo backward in communicating their ritual inſtructions, nor the antient heathen ſages ſo *very* abſurd and contradictory in the religious obſervances they eſtabliſhed, as we find them to be from hiſtory and experience.

him

him to receive. But, ſtill, this is nothing more than *gueſſing*. To be duly ſatisfied what we have to do in this caſe, it is evident we muſt have *his own* injunctions. This neceſſary uncertainty, then, on the one hand, and the general propenſity of human nature to expect God's verbal information concerning ſo momentous a point, on the other, are arguments for revelation, which, though not demonſtrative, muſt have great weight, when it is conſidered, that infidelity has little to urge againſt them, but what is borrowed from the artillery of atheiſm. And while *Plato* and *Socrates* have ſtrengthened theſe ſentiments with their ſuffrage, numbers, better able to judge of the queſtion than they, have believed, on the ſureſt grounds, that ſuch a revelation has actually been made, and that its firſt notices were coeval with man.

Quitting however this kind of reaſoning againſt the competency of human abilities in the preſent high enquiry, let us juſt glance at what they have really effected. Why, ſince, according to the opinion of

free-thinkers, all who profeſs to follow the chriſtian revelation are palpably deceived (and idolaters muſt be reckoned ſtill more groſsly blinded) it appears, that, at preſent, there is not at moſt above a hundredth part of the whole world, who have attained right notions of rendering a religious ſervice to their Maker; for I preſume the deiſts will not compute themſelves to be a greater portion of mankind than this. To which conſideration add the difficulty they will have to prove, that in many ages together ſuch a ſect of men, as they now profeſs themſelves to be, exiſted at all, and then let any one judge of the *all-ſufficiency* of their boaſted tutor Reaſon.

Chriſtians are by no means (as ſome of their adverſaries by their arguments ſeem to think) a peculiar kind of beings, interſperſed among men with intent to impoſe upon them by the propagation of ſlaviſh fears and ſuperſtitious follies. Nor are their miniſters poſſeſſed of any power of necromancy, beneath which it is impoſſible reaſon ſhould retain its native influence. The members of chriſtianity differ

in

in nothing from the eſpouſers of deiſm, but their articles of belief, and connected practices. They are of the ſame origin, endowed with the ſame faculties, and ſojourning on the ſame errand. And, therefore, if that part of the common maſs, which ſeems to delight in being diſtinguiſhed by the epithet *lay*, be impoſed upon, it muſt have originally been by *lay* artifice operating on *lay* infirmity, and conſequently the opprobrium of the deception muſt fall as heavily on the enemies of revelation as on its friends.

On the whole then: "Since (as "free-thinkers will allow) the learned "are often fond of impoſition, and the "ignorant full of credulity; ſince all "men are equally concerned in the duties "of religion, and (were they to be found "in human nature) few are capable of "accurate and deep reſearch; ſince men "may reaſon (as the poet rightly argues) "from what they know, but cannot ſa-"tisfactorily from what they do not "know,"—it appears, that, as the moral ſenſe will, with a little aſſiſtance from the

legiſlature, teach every one his behaviour in ſociety; ſo our duty to God, the further refinement of our impure nature, and the terms of final acceptance in a future ſtate, will be taught moſt reaſonably by *revelation*. For in this mode of conveyance it will have a proper *authority* and *power*, and appeal to that *faith* for its veracity, which is in the reach of *all*, and which undoubtedly has its baſis deeply laid in the human conſtitution *.

To add a word or two more on this topic, conſidered in another point of view.

The enemies of revelation are apt to think, that the mere circumſtance of its being liable to objections muſt neceſſarily, and without more to do, eſtabliſh deiſm; and that it is not at all requiſite to enquire into the ſolidity and nature of its own ſupport. But this opinion, wherever entertained, is equally contracted and dangerous. For deiſm is certainly a religion as well as chriſtianity, and they muſt both alike require poſitive and negative proofs

* See NOTE V.

of

of their authenticity. Now whatever is urged with any force in behalf of chriſtianity is an argument againſt deiſm; and its moſt ſanguine eſpouſers muſt grant, that there is great *plauſibility* at leaſt in many things, advanced by divines, and others in its favour. Deiſm therefore does not ſtand clear of difficulties, and conſequently in this reſpect muſt be upon a par with chriſtianity.

But why ſhould the infidel objections with which our holy faith is aſſailed, make its truth the leſs believed? Certainly it requires no uncommon extent of thought to foreſee, that an *actual* revelation, circumſtanced as the chriſtian one, ſhould always from ſeveral men meet with oppoſition and abuſe. *General* human nature is far from being perfect, and in *particulars*, we ſhould not be ſurpriſed to meet with inſtances of every ſpecies of degeneracy. Beſides, as the tempers, purſuits, and underſtandings of nations vary, the prevalence of apoſtacy may be expected alſo to vary. And though the preſent times are ſingularly diſpoſed to this in-

fatuation, every circumſtance clearly ſhews it to be the effect of depraved ignorance, rather than encreaſed penetration. From proverbial luxury, unbounded licentiouſneſs, and the moſt ridiculous vanity, what can be expected favourable to the intereſts of religion? How can its ſtill ſmall voice vibrate to the heart through the interruption of ſo many inflexible mediums? Let us not therefore entertain the worſe opinion of chriſtianity for the declining attention that is paid to its doctrines, and monitions, nor diſpute its authority, merely becauſe it is rivalled by deiſm. But let us act more rationally, and conſider the controverſy we have juſt had before us to turn ſolely upon the ſolution of this queſtion, "Whether is natural or revealed religion the better ſupported, and more likely to unfold the rules of worſhip, and obedience due to HIM, who placed us in this ſtate of trial and probation?" And here I am perſuaded, that the credentials to be adduced in behalf of chriſtianity are as much ſuperior to thoſe of deiſm, as the power of prophe-

ſying,

ſying, and working miracles, is a more extraordinary qualification than that of adjuſting ſyſtems of ethics, and writing philoſophical eſſays. But ſuppoſing the odds not ſo conſiderable, reaſon muſt allow, that the ſmalleſt advantage on the ſide of chriſtianity ought as evidently to incline us to it, in ſome degree, as if this advantage were ever ſo great;—a truth, which though of the plaineſt and moſt ſerviceable nature in this enquiry, ſeems not to have been ſufficiently attended to by the oppoſers of revelation, and which I am unwilling to efface with any new matter, that might add to the length of this note.

NOTE

NOTE III.

ON THE REASONS WE HAVE TO BELIEVE THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION TRUE.

Lines 97, 98, 99, 100.

Yes, howſoe'er theſe err, and others doubt,
Truth ſtill is truth, and man may find it out;
At leaſt what's uſeful,—hence the ſacred ray,
Which ſhews life's goal, and lights us on the way.

TO inſtance what is here advanced in one of the moſt intereſting ſubjects of enquiry, Religion;

In the next note it is ſhewn, that beſides *reaſon* (employed in examining the conſiſtency and fitneſs of the particulars of an adduced *fact*)—*faith* in the veracity of human teſtimony muſt neceſſarily enter into the foundation of all religious belief. This foundation therefore conſiſts of a mixture of faith and reaſon. But in any given inſtance, what is the whole aggregate, the quantity of each ingredient, or

or their true proportion to make the mixture valid, has not produced much ſpeculation; nor is it probable that any thing determinate, either as to the mode of eſtimation, or the eſtimation itſelf, will ever become part of our philoſophy. For indeed, where is the neceſſity of this mathematical preciſion? He muſt be little acquainted with the nature of moral evidence, who does not ſee, that it cannot depend on a fixed quantity, or proportion of theſe component parts, but that, on the contrary, they may vary through a large ſcale of ratios and ſum-totals, and ſtill produce in us the higheſt degree of conviction. It is on this account, that the wiſe men of every age of the chriſtian world have agreed, that the truth of an hiſtorical fact, or the divine miſſion of our Saviour, may be brought home to the boſoms of every one, not deſtitute of common underſtanding. And one capital manner, in which this is effected, may be gathered from what follows.

It will be allowed I fancy by all, who are ſatisfied of the wiſdom and providence of

of God, that men of ſuperior abilities and attainments are ſufficiently qualified to determine right concerning the truth of a revelation; and alſo, that it is very poſſible for an inferior degree of knowledge to be reaſonably ſatisfied both of the qualification, and ſincerity of theſe leading ſages, when they are induced to declare their ſentiments in its favour. This *ſecondary* belief (as we may call it) like every other, will, when examined, be found to reſt upon faith and reaſoning conjointly. And though it may be inferior in quantity, *&c.* to that of the ſource, from whence it was drawn, it is as certainly genuine and competent to the deciſion, as it is an evident truth, that many things in the moſt important ſecular concerns of the greateſt part of mankind, muſt often reſt on the judgment, and integrity of others. The eſtabliſhment of things, and the nature of man require, that this ſhould be the caſe. And inſtead of its being ſuppoſed (as it often is) that a well grounded evidence of a revelation is only within the reach of the learned, and that the leſs knowing can

form *no* proper deciſion concerning it, we ought to eſteem it a certain truth, that ordinary faculties, under favourable circumſtances, may always find ſufficient grounds for their faith, and that to the enlightened and candid mind the motives to believe muſt ſtill be abundantly *more* than neceſſary.—It would be tedious to purſue this idea through all its parts and conſequences, but it may be illuſtrated, not unaptly, by the following example.

There is not perhaps above one tenth of the inhabitants of this iſland, who do not now, or have not once, on the bare report of others, and the obſervation of certain agreeing circumſtances, believed, that there is ſuch a place as *London*. From a daily crowd of paſſengers to and from that part where it is ſaid to lie, of unſuſpicious appearance, as to deceit, who have the name perpetually in their mouths; and from the articles of trade, which are conſtantly carrying that way, whoſe directions conſtantly recognize it, and ſeveral other ſimilar particulars, — from theſe circumſtances, I ſay, thoſe who live

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in the precincts of this city, and have not ſeen it, give full credit to its exiſtence. Others, ſtill further ſituated from it, of courſe, have leſs of this proof in quantity, and perhaps of an inferior kind offered to them, but ſufficient to fix their belief with equal firmneſs, that there is ſuch a place as *London*. In like manner, others yet more remote, and with a ſtill lower degree of proof, have a belief every way as firm, as the more advanced circles; while the moſt remote and obſcure corner is neither ignorant of the name, nor doubtful of its truth. Now could we ſuppoſe a ſociety of men ſo far removed from this object of faith, as to be dubious of its exiſtence, it is manifeſtly in their power, by giving themſelves a little trouble of enquiry (or at moſt by making a proper remove towards the place) to put themſelves in the way of as much evidence as falls to the ſhare of a part not ſo remote, and whoſe weight would be ſufficient to influence and fix their belief.

Now in a manner ſimilar to this may the grounds of religious faith vary in quantity (or

(or force, &c.) and ſtill be alike powerful in effect. And thus, by a little well applied and candid induſtry, may a wavering chriſtian accompliſh a reaſonable ſatisfaction, that our revelation is of Divine origin.—The parallel will not need to be drawn further out, and one more remark ſhall conclude the note.

Since the nature of man is ſuch, that the inferior claſſes muſt neceſſarily, in ſome degree, build their religious belief on the opinions of thoſe, whom they think the moſt reſpectable and capable part of their ſuperiors, it greatly behoves every eminent character, deiſtically inclined, to conſider well on what grounds he arraigns an eſtabliſhed religion of the utmoſt purity, happily adapted to the infirmities of our nature, and how truly blameable is that converſation, which may tend to the embarraſſment or apoſtacy of a fellow-creature. For it needs no great ſagacity to ſee, that ſuch a ſituation of mind may do him infinite harm, but cannot poſſibly do him any real good. And when

an act is condemned by every thing diſcreet and humane, they muſt have ſtrange notions of *morality*, or be conſpicuous inſtances of *frailty*, that are ever detected in its commiſſion.

NOTE

NOTE IV.

ON THE EFFICACY OF FAITH.

Line 326.

That Faith is Reaſon, when expounded right.

THE faſtidious exception, which all neglecters and deſpiſers of revealed religion have to the word *faith*, will probably incline ſuch readers to conceive this and other ſingular expreſſions, as equally compounded of paradox and methodiſm. But let us explain ourſelves a little. The faith here meant is a belief in *Chriſt*, the divinity of his miſſion, and hence the truth of the holy ſcriptures; and which, when properly examined, will be found to reſt ultimately on the credit due to human teſtimony concerning certain facts. Indeed the truth of every revelation from the Deity, whether it relate to his Exiſtence or his Will, muſt have one and the ſame foundation. And in like manner as

has been already argued *, we may in the preſent caſe obſerve, that thoſe believers, who were eye-witneſſes to the miraculous credentials which our *Saviour*, his diſciples and forerunning prophets exhibited in behalf of their reſpective miſſions, muſt (as far as they were intended to operate on their belief) have truſted to the veracity of their ſenſes, and the accuracy of their judgments; while thoſe, who were not eye-witneſſes (in which claſs the greateſt part of mankind is neceſſarily included) muſt give credit to the report of others. For though the prophecies, fulfilled and fulfilling, joined to the internal evidence of the ſacred writings, are ſhining collateral and connecting proofs (as we may call them) of their divine ſource, yet the truth of the facts they relate, both as originally happening, and of their being uncorruptly tranſmitted, reſts ſtill upon the faith that is placed in human teſtimony. Concerning the veracity of this teſtimony we at this day may reaſon; and if, after

* Note I.

the

the experiment, in any given inſtance, we ſtill believe, and have no doubt of our candour and impartiality, the conviction is, and ought to be, eſteemed a ſufficient ground for any conduct, which has relation to the inſtance in queſtion, be the conſequence ever ſo important. This is aſſerted, becauſe our nature has provided no other foundation for our deciſions in theſe caſes. *Beliefs*, therefore, in this province of reaſon (and in which, were revelation out of the queſtion, we are a number of other ways deeply concerned) are analogous to *axioms* in the demonſtrative ſcience of quantity. Beyond them we cannot refer in our inveſtigations, and in their report we are naturally obliged to acquieſce.

It is true, that as theſe beliefs are liable to be influenced by the failings of our nature, particularly our prejudices, whatever is deduced from them is not in all caſes ſo fully to be relied on, as that which is founded on the above named axioms; though, in general, to a well informed and candid mind it will raiſe a conviction,

which is little inferior to that of the moſt rigid demonſtration. On account however of the poſſibility of error in theſe fundamental grounds of opinion, or judgment, concerning hiſtorical facts, theſe opinions or judgments are called *beliefs*, to diſtinguiſh them from the concluſions of a ſeverer ſcience, and conſtantly to ſuggeſt the nature of their firſt principles.

It appears therefore, on the whole, that the chriſtian belief, here explained, is not in any wiſe the impreſſion of ſuperſtition, or a mark of credulity; but that it may have any degree of perſuaſion in it, the nature of the object will allow; that it may frequently amount to the higheſt degree of conviction, and that it is as *reaſonable* in itſelf (or as much founded upon proper principles) as the ſtricteſt concluſions of ſcience.—Nay, has it not been ſhewn in a preceding note, that the moſt momentous of all truths, the belief of the being of a God, can in moſt minds reſt upon no ſurer a foundation? Scepticiſm, or an over ſcrupulous demand of evidence, is therefore here in ſome degree as faulty, as

it

it is when it diſputes the truth of a ſcience, or the certainty of a ſenſe.

This faith or belief being liable to be injured by our prejudices and failings, it muſt, when ſo, plainly from this circumſtance, be very capable of being rectified; and hence its proper regulation becomes one of the greateſt concerns of life; though it is equally true, ſuch a taſk cannot often be unattended with difficulties. And as, on ſome account or other, every one may be truly ſaid to have to work out his ſalvation, ſo moſt probably a diſbelief of the goſpel, or a propenſity to it, is the peculiar trial of many. But it would lead us much beyond the bounds of a note, to enter into theſe matters in the moſt curſory manner. It muſt ſuffice therefore to obſerve in this place, that the reaſonableneſs of the faith juſt mentioned; its application to the hiſtory of redemption (or the religion of *Chriſt*); the neceſſity of it to our final acceptance with our Maker (or the propriety of its being a condition of receiving a reward); the poſſibility of acquiring it where wanting, and every

other of its attributes, have been ſhewn by divines, and other writers in behalf of chriſtianity, with a degree of energy and ſatisfaction, which does as much honour to their underſtandings and piety, as the never having made the reſearch muſt be reproachful to a capable diſbeliever; — and in which predicament, I am afraid, numbers of our moſt buſy ſceptics and free-thinkers will unhappily be found.

NOTE

NOTE V.

THAT A PROPENSITY TO BELIEVE IN REVELATION IS NO IMPEDIMENT TO OUR JUDGING PROPERLY OF ITS TRUTH.

Line 268.

And gives that Faith its play, to which we're prone.

IN the diſputes, which have of late years too unhappily prevailed between chriſtians and deiſts, it ſeems to be one of the chief wiſhes of the latter to be conſidered as men, that have been able, through the aſſiſtance of philoſophy, to diveſt themſelves of every prepoſſeſſion in favour of revelation; and that therefore they, and *only* they, are to be eſteemed proper and impartial judges of its merits and authenticity. On the contrary, they never fail to obſerve to chriſtians, that their faith is purely the effect of prejudice; that they only find their religion true, becauſe they

wiſh

wiſh it to be ſo; and that it is hence impoſſible they ſhould ever be conſidered as fair and competent judges in this important cauſe.

Theſe oppoſite repreſentations of the minds and tempers of the two contending parties we will grant to be true. But the inferences drawn from them cannot be admitted; for they are as certainly falſe in themſelves, as they may on a curſory view appear plauſible: and as one of the chief pillars of infidelity is erected upon them, it ſhall be the buſineſs of this note to expoſe their weakneſs and inſufficiency.

General and abſtract reaſoning, in what concerns practical and human nature, is often found to be liable at every ſtep to deviate into error. In order therefore to decide upon this queſtion with the greateſt confidence, we will fix our attention upon a real example.

Imagine then, that, for a certain period of years after the creation, mankind had never heard of a revelation from God; that nevertheleſs they had been all along fully ſatisfied of his exiſtence, and convinced that themſelves and all things elſe

were

were the work of his hand, and under his immediate guidance and protection. Grant them alſo to have enjoyed every moral, and intellectual quality, in as high a degree of perfection, as our nature is capable of. Suppoſe now, that to ſuch a community it were told, that God had ſent a meſſenger to them with further and more complete directions concerning their conduct towards him and one another, than could be made known to them by the light of nature; and that, as a proof of his miſſion, he had exhibited a ſeries of the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles.—Under ſuch circumſtances, how muſt their minds have been affected? What is the genuine picture of human nature on this occaſion? I appeal to every one, however learned or illiterate, who can either truſt his own feelings or experience, whether they would not wiſh the account to be true? If they loved God (as they muſt, if they had right notions of him) that affection would warmly ſolicit its approbation. If they feared him, ſelf-intereſt would attach them to it. If they had a pleaſure in glorifying his name,

they

they would be tranſported at ſo high an occaſion to manifeſt their pious enthuſiaſm. In ſhort, every thing amiable in humanity would rejoice at the account, and wait impatiently for its further manifeſtation;—every one would cry out with young *Samuel*, "*Speak, Lord, for thy ſervant heareth.*"

Such would be the ſituation of ſimple nature on this report. And if it be nature; if it ariſe neceſſarily, as it certainly does, from the relation of God to his dependent and imperfect creatures, it muſt be right and laudable. And if ſuch a temper of mind ſhould not be ſuppoſed incapable of error, in ſelecting a true religion from a number of falſe ones, it will furniſh the beſt, if not the *only* apology, that can be made for the unhappy miſtake.—Thus much we gather from an examination of the inſtance before us: and the univerſal prepoſſeſſion of mankind in all ages and places to expect and embrace ſuch revelations, whether they have been deceived or not, is an experimental proof, too ſtriking to be overlooked, of the truth of

of our concluſions.—We may yet perhaps add ſtrength to theſe notions by aſking, if in the inveſtigation of the *being* of God, through the medium of reaſon, it would injure the force of the reſult to recollect, that we wiſhed to find it true?

Let us now compare this with the ſituation of mind, which free-thinkers plume themſelves on having acquired, and then oppoſe them to one another, and ſee which is the more likely to enable us to judge of the truth of a revelation, ſaid to come from God.

They give us to underſtand, that by long ſtudy and experience they have diveſted themſelves of a predilection for theſe revelations. When one is propoſed, they would have it believed they are perfectly neutral in their examination; that they labour with all their might to give it no more credit, than what ariſes from a cool and careful compariſon of circumſtances; and that ſuch a philoſophical indifference, and ſcrupulous caution, are abſolutely neceſſary to enable us to form a reaſonable opinion concerning the authenticity of what claims our belief, as the will of the Deity.

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If they really have acquired this ſceptical turn of mind (and their writings will not leave us in any doubt concerning it) there needs nothing to be ſaid, after what is advanced above, to prove it *unnatural*; and if unnatural, it would be ſtrange, if it were the beſt formed of any other, to undertake the grand deciſion in queſtion. But this plea muſt be examined a little more narrowly.

A perfect indifference in human nature, with regard to any thing that concerns its well being, may be ſafely pronounced impoſſible in itſelf. And with whatever confidence it may be aſſerted, or with whatever zeal it may be purſued, it is no other than a chimera of the brain, and the empty vaunt of either ignorance, or deſign. Whether they do not know, or do not chuſe to recollect it, the wiſeſt and beſt of men have conſtantly acknowledged this to be the truth, and the moſt ſimple and unlearned perſon will feel its authenticity every moment, on the ſlighteſt examination of his own heart.

If then free-thinkers do not experience in

in themſelves that prepoſſeſſion in favour of a revelation, which we have above deſcribed, as neceſſarily connected with human nature; and if it is impoſſible to be totally indifferent concerning it, then it is plain, that the ſceptical neutrality, the faſtidious coolneſs, they commend ſo highly, muſt be the effect of ſome ſtrong prejudice, or moral depravity. They muſt either wiſh to gratify ſome illaudable paſſion (as the love of ſingularity, and the fame of ſuperior wiſdom) or they muſt diſlike the duties and reſtraints, which of courſe it will lay them under, on account of their own vicious habits and propenſities.

Men, who have been long uſed to conſider the chriſtian world, as labouring under the influence of the moſt palpable prejudices, will not be readily brought to believe, that they themſelves are ſtriking and real inſtances of it. But the conſequences of our reaſoning cannot be avoided. If they can look on revelation with an eye of indifference, they muſt have foregone ſome of their moſt amiable inſtincts. And if in the room of theſe native ſuggeſtions,

tions, they experience the workings of a ſceptical philoſophy, they are themſelves the ſophiſticated beings they decry, and moſt likely to be the dupes of every erroneous judgment, that has reſpect to this weighty concern.

It is not to religion alone ſuch reaſoning, as the above, is confined. It might be ſhewn to take place in almoſt every thing we determine about in our ordinary tranſactions with one another. We can never be wholly neutral. Our prepoſſeſſions muſt incline us either one way or another in all theſe caſes, and this pretty nearly in proportion to their apparent conſequence. For an inſtance or two: In our acts of charity, genuine nature muſt ſtill be touched with the feeling of pity; but does it follow, that, from this circumſtance, we cannot form a proper judgment concerning the object? In our ordinary dealings with mankind, we muſt always be under the influence of ſelf-intereſt; but cannot we therefore be juſt and honeſt in them? In our competitions with one another, we muſt in ſome degree experience an ambition

to excel: but are we from thence to be ſuppoſed to be wholly incapable of diſcovering a competitor's merit? It were paying but a poor compliment to our reaſon, to imagine it ſo much under the influence of theſe petty inſtincts, as to be diſqualified for aſſiſting us properly in any deciſion of the above-mentioned kind. Theſe impediments (if they be impediments) are neceſſarily preſuppoſed in the very office of this ſuperior faculty; and therefore cannot (if our great Author has been able to accompliſh his deſigns) be imagined deſtructive of its nature.

When, therefore, reaſon is blinded, and deviates from its native rectitude (as it frequently does) it may be aſked, from whence this *falling off* proceeds? I anſwer, from a tribe of habits and paſſions, which are not of ſuch general influence, though often more potent in their ſway. They are the produce of our failings, and take their riſe more immediately from unbounded pride, avarice, or ambition; irreconcileable hatred, the gratification of inordinate appetites, the accompliſhment of

 ſiniſter

ſiniſter purpoſes, and the like imperfections, to which human nature is but too liable. To theſe tyrants of the ſoul, and to theſe *alone*, does reaſon ever yield its ſovereignty; and as they are always inſtruments of our own raiſing, whatever be the conſequence of their uſurpation, we muſt be accountable for it to our Maker.

From the whole of what has been ſaid on the queſtion under conſideration, it appears (contrary perhaps to the *opinions* of many, though in perfect agreement with the *feelings* of all) that a prepoſſeſſion in favour of revelation for the good of mankind ought not to be called a prejudice; that not to feel this prepoſſeſſion, muſt manifeſt an actual prejudice againſt it, and that thoſe people, who are beſt affected to religion, are of all others in the beſt ſituation of mind, as to temper, to form a true judgment both of its meaning and authenticity.

NOTE

NOTE VI.

THAT DEISTICAL WRITINGS HAVE BEEN FULLY REFUTED; WITH A SHORT ANSWER TO SOME OF THEIR MOST COMMON OBJECTIONS.

Line 319.

Our ſires have ſolv'd each irreligious plea.

THOUGH, from the nature of many topics of debate, it is not poſſible that every one acquainted with them can have ſufficient parts, or acquirements, to ſee on which ſide the truth lies, however deſirous he may be to diſcover it, yet *error* often finds the ſucceſs of its cauſe to reſt principally upon an ignorance *of* or inattention *to* what has already been advanced againſt it. From the perpetual ſucceſſion of new generations of men, every one is neceſſarily obliged to collect

his knowledge for himſelf *de novo*. And therefore it muſt be the caſe of many, to paſs their whole lives without ever having the leaſt apprehenſion of what has been done for the ſervice of truth by others, in ſeveral of its departments; and conſequently, purely on account of *ignorance*, they muſt be frequently the dupes of many erroneous opinions.

With regard to the diſpute with deiſts concerning the truth of revelation, this is exceedingly manifeſt. For although I am fully perſuaded, that there never has been a ſingle objection ſtarted againſt it, which has not long ſince been clearly refuted or obviated, yet from real ignorance of the very attempt, as well as a blameable inattention to it when known, we find the poiſon of infidelity infecting the minds of the young and inexperienced, in a manner which certainly would not be the caſe, were they in due time acquainted with theſe ſerviceable productions, and incited to the peruſal of them with ordinary zeal.

There

There is but too much room to fear, that religious knowledge and faith in Chriſt has of late years been, on ſeveral accounts, greatly on the decline among us. And to prevent the cauſe here noticed from contributing for the future ſo amply to it, as it has done, I think a catalogue of all the deiſtical books ever printed in the kingdom, with the names of the anſwers that have been given them ſubjoined, would be of conſiderable ſervice. But more particularly this might be hoped, if it was accompanied with a collection of all the deiſtical objections briefly ſtated, ranged in ſuch a manner, as a view of the materials might ſuggeſt to be the moſt eaſy for recourſe, &c. and followed with a brief anſwer, and references to the books and pages, where they were more fully diſcuſſed.

Did not the cavils of deiſm as commonly meet the ear, as any other petulant converſation, it would undoubtedly be beſt not to lead the chriſtian diſciple much into this perverſe controverſy, but to confine his religious knowledge to a thorough

acquaintance with its nature, end, and principles. But as apoſtacy walks vauntingly in broad day, and ſeveral might fear, that revelation is liable to *more* objections than have come to their knowledge; in order that they might know *the worſt*, and have *all* the futile enquiry, which infidelity has at any time impiouſly employed againſt the church of *Chriſt*, diſplayed before them, I am induced to recommend this plan. When all is at peace, the art of war need only be the ſtudy of a few; but when deſtruction is threatened by an enemy, it becomes every one, who is a lover of his country, to know ſomething of the uſe of weapons. And (to continue the figure) a ready acceſs to an orderly and well ſtored magazine of warlike neceſſaries, muſt be a circumſtance as encouraging, as it may be uſeful.—For theſe reaſons I could wiſh to ſee ſuch a work as the above completed. It would undoubtedly require good abilities, and conſiderable labour; but not ſo much, I ſhould hope, as long to deter every capable and zealous lover of revelation from entering upon

upon what at this time appears ſo needful an undertaking.

Long as the following thoughts on the nature of deiſtical objections, and the great danger of apoſtacy, may ſeem, I am tempted to ſubjoin them to this article, as tending to complete the deſign of theſe explanatory ſketches.

There is no object of human enquiry, that can be ſo well underſtood, or ſo clearly explained, as not to furniſh a number of openings to cavil and miſconception. In every province of ſcience, ſomething plauſible to ſome minds may be advanced againſt its firſt principles, much more againſt a complex intermixture of them. Even the cleareſt and moſt univerſally acknowledged of all truths, the being and providence of God, has either ſeriouſly, or wantonly, been called in queſtion by a number of doubts and difficulties, which very few can properly ſolve.

This ſituation of human knowledge neceſſarily ariſes from the weakneſs of our faculties and the depravity of our minds. And though one would expect, that no

thinking perſon could be long a ſtranger to ſo ſerviceable a piece of information, yet the frequent want of it is one of the principal misfortunes that the lovers of our holy religion have to lament. If its enemies can but appear *plauſible* againſt it, many are too ready to believe it cannot come from God; forgetting that though God be perfect, we are imperfect; that whatever relates to his nature and government cannot be thoroughly comprehended by humanity; and hence, as to ſeveral particulars, may (without the leaſt impeachment of its veracity) furniſh the ignorant, the prejudiced, or the evil-minded, with a number of petty doubts, cavils, and objections.

It muſt be ſo. We have ſeen inſtances of theſe failings in too many other ſubjects of enquiry not to expect them to appear in religious ones. In our own country, every advantage, which this ſituation of the ſcriptures naturally furniſhes, has been taken againſt them, in order to depreciate their value, and diſprove their authenticity. But though the uncharitable deſign has been

conducted

conducted with the utmoſt zeal and artifice by ſeveral men of undoubted abilities, yet in the opinion of a ſhining majority of the wiſeſt and moſt worthy of mankind, they have been diſappointed in their aims, and, contrary to their wiſhes, have been the occaſion of diſcovering ſuch an unexpected extenſion of concurring truths, and ſuch an irreſiſtible phalanx of new and ſound arguments, as muſt render the employment of future infidels (though they may affect a contrary tone) not the candid diſcovery of truth, but the diſhoneſt art of hiding it.

The ignorant and hacknied plea of natural reaſon's being able fully to teach us our duty to God, and one another, has been ſhewn by experience, the moſt powerful of all preachers, to be falſe. The heathen world was left to its own guidance for the ſpace of four thouſand years; yet after the utmoſt their wits and philoſophers could do, the morals it taught were often impure, and its ideas of God, and his providence, generally groſs or impious. We, it is true, at this hour, are bleſſed with

better

better notions of theſe important articles; but then they are the revelations of the Holy Spirit, and not the diſcoveries of men.

The argument againſt chriſtianity, drawn from a conſideration of the many contending revelations, which now flouriſh, and have heretofore prevailed in the world, has been ſhewn very ſatisfactorily to be of no weight. Becauſe many may be wrong, does it prove none to be right? Some *one* very probably is ſo; and if this be allowed, none but the religion of Chriſt can ſtand the teſt of a rational enquiry. Every other either fails from the impurity of its doctrines, the nature of its credentials, or both. And it is the height of ſcepticiſm to conclude, becauſe we experience many errors, there can be no ſuch thing as truth.

But the ſcriptures, it is urged, contain ſome inconceivable myſteries, ſeveral unmeaning ceremonies, and here and there a contradiction. As to the firſt article, it has been frequently ſhewn to be an argument rather in favour of their divine extraction

traction than againſt it. The ſecond is falſe in its own terms; for how can any thing be unmeaning, if it is enjoined by God as a duty, and the covenant of a reward? As to the third, it is flatly denied. The ſcriptures contain no real contradictions. There may be difficulties in them, which one man may not be able to reconcile, and yet another may. And if no one could clearly account for them, it would be much more reaſonable to ſuſpect our own ignorance, than the fallibility of the ſacred penman. Do men deny the natural world to be a work of a wiſe and perfect God, becauſe there are ſeveral things in it they cannot comprehend? — But the purport of this queſtion needs neither inference, nor application.

It is yet objected, that the ſcriptures teach us, that God has ſhewn peculiar favour to the Jews and Chriſtians, and that therefore they impute a partiality to him, which is inconſiſtent with his divine nature and juſtice. This is a bold charge indeed, and the word *partiality* may have a bad ſound with it. But of the number

of

of weak pleas we daily meet with in this controverſy, this is certainly the weakeſt; as has been ſhewn with more eloquence than it deſerves. What! is the Lord of all things under any obligation to diſtribute his favours by a certain ſtandard? In a free gift, has the receiver a right to quarrel either with its nature or quantity? But why argue about the matter? Caſt an eye into the world; God is there doing what the ſcriptures ſay he has done, and will do. He *is* diſtributing his bleſſings in various meaſures: to the different ſpecies of beings, to the different individuals of each ſpecies, to the different parts of their abode, and different periods of their ſucceſſion, is he allotting different bleſſings and advantages. This may teach us by a ſhort logic, that the ſuperior privilege, which a chriſtian claims over a heathen, is neither abſurd, unjuſt, nor *partial* in itſelf, and that therefore the ſcriptures, which clearly inculcate this article, ought not on that account to be ſuſpected of wanting divine authenticity.

Theſe objections, and every other brought againſt chriſtianity, have, as remarked before, been ſatisfactorily obviated. And though the ingenuity and learning of its numerous advocates have in this conteſt done honour to human abilities, yet the whole triumph is to be imputed to the juſtice of their cauſe, and the innumerable advantages that truth has, and ever will have, over error and falſehood.

In *this* ſituation, I flatter myſelf, does the controverſy ſtand between chriſtians and deiſts; and for theſe reaſons (among ſeveral others of leſs conſequence) have the writings of the holy penmen met with deriſion and contempt. But of the many among us, who diſlike the ſcriptures, how few have contracted their apoſtacy from a careful examination of what is advanced by the contending parties! Upon what trivial grounds have they given up all hopes of Redeeming Love, and the ſanctifying grace of a covenant of mercy! Their own vain notions how God ſhould deal with men,—the ſmartneſs of ſome couplet of poetry,—the occaſional miſtakes of ignorant

ignorant zeal,—the brilliancy of a Bacchanalian jeſt, and the faſhionable deſire of differing in opinion from the inſipidity of chriſtian meekneſs, are generally the *immediate* cauſe of this malady's appearing ſo common among the lower claſs of mankind. But what is the *prediſpoſing* cauſe? In anſwering this, I am afraid the remarks illuſtrated in the laſt note will lean hard upon them. They muſt, ere they come to this temper of mind, have relinquiſhed an amiable *prepoſſeſſion*, which is infuſed into every human being, and hence are become the unhappy objects of a malignant prejudice. Elſe how is it poſſible, that ſuch vain and trivial motives could overcome the cloud of witneſſes and weighty conſiderations, which on all hands prove to us, *That the way of man is not in himſelf; it is not in man, that walketh, to direct his ſteps* *; —*that Jeſus is the true light, which lighteth every man which cometh into the world* †;—*and, that there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby*

* Jer. x. 23. † John i. 9.

we

we muſt be ſaved, but the name of Jeſus Chriſt *.

Every one will allow, that if the God, who condeſcended to make us, has alſo thought proper to inſtruct us in the means of attaining his favour, and a greater weight of glory, it is highly our intereſt, as well as our duty, to hearken to and obey his holy commands. This ſurely, if true, muſt be the moſt important concern of life. And with a volume before us of excellent purity, authenticated with every mark of a heavenly miſſion, intended to convey theſe commands; ſurrounded, as we are, with ſuch a number of the beſt and wiſeſt of men, who put their truſt of future happineſs in it; and after the ſucceſſion of ſo many ages, that have thoroughly examined and approved it;—if under theſe circumſtances, I ſay, any perſon feels a diſinclination to believe the divinity of its ſource, great and difficult is the taſk he muſt go through, before he can reaſonably reſt ſatisfied in his opinion, and flatter himſelf he will be the object of God's

* Acts iv. 12, 10.

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uncovenanted mercy. With greater anxiety than he ever ſought after health, riches, and reputation, ſhould he endeavour to inform himſelf of all that can be ſaid in its favour, while he examines it with the utmoſt impartiality. His prayers ſhould be conſtantly filled with petitions to the fountain of grace, to lead him into the truth. Nor ſhould he give the leaſt reſpite to his thoughts, until he could lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, before his God, I have done all in my power to be ſatisfied of the truth of thy word; and if I have erred in rejecting it, impute it to my infirmities, but not to my will. — In ſuch an inſtance, I would not wiſh to damp the hopes of pardon and mercy at the final day of account. But where nothing of this kind is attempted, as is more frequently the caſe; where the ſcriptures are ſeldom looked into, but for a jeſt, or an objection;—what is ſaid in their defence, never enquired after, nor a ſingle wiſh expreſſed to have this important point clearly ſettled, I do not know a more deplorable ſituation in nature. What impiouſneſs for ſuch perſons to imagine

imagine they can be ſaved in what manner *they* pleaſe! What daringneſs to ſhut their eyes againſt a revelation, which has ſuch a *number* of vouchers that it came from God! What folly to plead a *ſincerity* of belief in what has no grounds for its ſupport, but their own prejudices and perverſeneſs!

In this irreligious age, no one inclinable to relinquiſh his hopes in Chriſt, can revolve theſe things too frequently in his mind. The ground he ſtands upon is infinitely more dangerous, than that of the docile believer he affects to pity. Should thoſe, who are born and educated in our chriſtian community, be ſuppoſed in the wrong, they have every plea for the mercy of God, conſidering it ſimply as an error, that a deiſt can have. But if we conſider the religion of Chriſtians poſſible to be true, as well as falſe, how amazing is the difference! If the holy ſcriptures be true, and the deiſt has refuſed the terms of ſalvation offered in them, he muſt be of all men moſt miſerable; and at the laſt great day of retribution, when he comes before

his ſlighted Redeemer and affronted Judge, he muſt loſe a bleſſing beyond the power of conception, and heap upon himſelf a condemnation, which words cannot expreſs. If deiſm be right, and revelation a lye, God ſurely cannot be offended with us for obſerving a few ſupernumerary ceremonies with no other intent than to manifeſt our obedience to what we thought his moſt holy commands.—This may be called trite reaſoning; but it muſt always be reliſhed with the well-diſpoſed while it has the charms of truth, and relates to the higheſt concern of probationary nature.

Conſider then, ye deſpiſers of a crucified Saviour!—ye who are more willing to put your truſt in *Bolingbroke* than *Chriſt*, *Tindal* than *St. Paul*—conſider, I ſay, whether you ought not frequently, in your diſlike to chriſtianity, to be charged with ſome criminal prejudice, or culpable inattention;—whether it be, that you do not love the book of God, becauſe it condemns ſome favourite luſt; or that you are too proud to acknowledge a religion, that teaches the vanity of human wit, and the worth

worth of humility and a contrite heart. Conſider, alſo, that though the natural *prepoſſeſſion*, mentioned in the laſt note, may adopt a falſe religion, the *prejudice*, that was oppoſed to it, has as great a chance, at leaſt, to reject a true one.—Then let the following momentous words ſpeak for themſelves.

Be not aſhamed of the teſtimony of our Lord. Whoever ſhall confeſs me before men (ſaith our Saviour) *him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven; but whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven: And whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and my words, in this ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he comes, in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels* *.

* 2 Tim. i. 8. Mat. x. 32, 33. Mark viii. 38.

NOTE VII.

ON THE PLEASURES WHICH RELIGIOUS STUDIES ARE CAPABLE OF YIELDING TO THE INGENIOUS.

Lines 337, 338.

When changeful Taſte, each vainer ſcience paſt,
On fair Religion turns her eye at laſt.

AMID the various objects of anxious enquiry, which have at different periods become faſhionable among the learned and ingenious, religion has not been wholly omitted. There have been religious ages; and in ſpite of appearances we truſt they will return again. For though there is ſomething ſickly in the idea of this ſtudy to the mind of modiſh refinement, it nevertheleſs, barely as a ſtudy, has charms, which rational nature muſt ever reliſh. Nay, it is very probable, that neither the natural nor the moral world is more

more replete with inſtances of divine wiſdom, and inherent beauty, than the religious one; and yet how few of thoſe ſuperior geniuſes, who are *feelingly alive* to every charm of the two firſt, are the leaſt converſant with thoſe of the laſt?

Where indeed a ſtudy muſt, or ought to lead to a careful examination of the heart, and a conſtant circumſpection of the conduct, we cannot flatter ourſelves that it ſhould be generally grateful. But when we ſee perſons of taſte and genius, who are free from deiſtical ſcruples, and have no criminal practices to keep in countenance, comparatively ignorant of God and his wiſdom in this ſublime department, and not deſirous of a more intimate knowledge of them; there is ſomething in it ſo very unreaſonable, that we ſhould be aſtoniſhed, were we not too well acquainted with the lamentable inadvertency of man, and the powerful witchcraft of faſhion. They muſt be conſcious that the ſentiments they ſeem to entertain by their conduct, with regard to this great buſineſs of life, will have their influence upon leſs en-

lightened minds; and that their ſhining talents were rather intended to direct them towards real happineſs, than eventually to decoy them from it. What they owe to others, then, as well as themſelves, condemns this reigning neglect; and faſhion itſelf muſt ſurely find an accuſer in the idea of *ſuperior abilities*, rather than an apologiſt. One of the *brighteſt* of men * has ſaid, that religion ſhould be "the haven "and ſabbath of all men's contempla-"tions:" And what has he ſaid more than ſaints and martyrs have verified; and owned the experiment replete with the higheſt of all mental enjoyments?

It might however rouſe this ſtrange inattention, to reflect, that a reliſh for any enquiry of ordinary attainment may be eaſily accompliſhed by habit; and to be properly told, as they might with much truth, that the various and copious writings we have in divinity, perhaps exhibit as great and pleaſing inſtances of human abilities, as are to be met with in any other province of erudition.

* Lord Verulam.

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But, is there not ſomething in the very nature of *holy writ*, which might be expected, in the higheſt poſſible degree, to attract the attention, and gratify the curioſity of the inquiſitive? The ingenious naturaliſt is delighted to trace the finger of God in his material productions. It yields him genuine tranſport to contemplate the divine *ideas*, as they are exemplified in *colour*, *form*, and *mechaniſm*. And is it not, if poſſible, a ſtill ſublimer ſpecies of gratification, to have his *notions*, as I may ſay, conveyed to us in *language itſelf*, concerning many things that belong to our nature and well-being? to have his conceptions laid open to us, as a *moraliſt*, a *legiſlator*, a *father*, and a *judge*; to ſee a new *literary world* diſcloſed, calculated to awaken our beſt affections, employ our higheſt reaſon, and confound our greateſt comprehenſion? Surely there is ſomething in all this which ought powerfully to attach itſelf to the ingenious mind. Surely every one would think it an object of the utmoſt curioſity to peruſe even a ſingle *ſentence*, or *thought*, which proceeded from the lips of abſolute

truth and perfection; much more ſo to have laid under his eye a whole volume of ſuch communication, and on a ſubject too which is infinitely more important than any other. We ſee indeed, that, in conformity to this ſtatement, the ſtudy of religion is, on the whole, the moſt univerſally prevailing. In ſome degree or other all find pleaſure in it; the moſt common reader as well as the moſt learned. Beſides its importance and curioſity, it has alſo another charm, which contributes to its general aſcendancy over the mind, which is peculiar to itſelf, and which ought not to be unnamed. On reflection, it yields *this* ſolid ſatisfaction, that it is not, after all, mere amuſement; that the time beſtowed upon it cannot, on any account, be regretted as futile or loſt; becauſe, like its final object *godlineſs*, it relates not only to the life that now is, but to that which is to come *.

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* The following ſentiments, from the works of another of the brighteſt geniuſes this country has produced, muſt be read with pleaſure.

" Though many ordinary heads run ſmoothly over the

This is obſerved of religion merely as a ſtudy capable of adminiſtering to the entertainment and enlargement of the mind. But when its vital and eſſential purpoſe is conſidered; when, inſtead of the pleaſures of a deluſive moment, we place before us

the ſcripture, yet I muſt acknowledge it is one of the hardeſt books I have met with; and therefore well deſerveth thoſe numerous comments, expoſitions, and annotations, which make up a good part of our libraries.

"However, ſo affected I am therewith, that I wiſh there had been more of it; and a larger volume of that divine piece, which leaveth ſuch welcome impreſſions, and ſomewhat more, in the readers, than the words and ſenſe after it. At leaſt, who would not be glad that many things barely hinted were at large delivered in it? The particulars of the diſpute between the doctors and our Saviour could not but be welcome to them, who have every word in honour which proceeded from his mouth, or was otherwiſe delivered by him; and ſo would be glad to be aſſured what he wrote with his finger on the ground: but eſpecially to have a particular of that inſtructing narration or diſcourſe which he made unto the diſciples after his reſurrection, where 'tis ſaid, *And beginning at Moſes, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the ſcriptures, the things concerning himſelf.*"

Sir THOMAS BROWN's Miſcel. Tracts.

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the joys of a happy eternity, how vain are all other objects of buſy enquiry! and how deceitful and beggarly the higheſt charms of art imprinted on the breaſt of its moſt rapturous admirers!—As the huſbandman, while he toys with a flower, and is pleaſed with the neatneſs of his farm, has nevertheleſs his principal care fixed upon the recompence of harveſt; ſo, though in our chriſtian pilgrimage we may occaſionally indulge in innocent amuſements, and gratify the taſtes appropriated to the beauties of nature, yet he only is wiſe, who looks beyond theſe tranſitory pleaſures, and pants for the riches of *his* grace, whoſe ſmile is beatitude, and WHOSE KINGDOM SHALL HAVE NO END.

While talking on the pleaſures and advantages to be derived from theological ſtudies, it is impoſſible not to look forward to the time when we hope a new reviſion of the Bible ſhall be completed, from the collation of ancient manuſcripts now carrying on, under royal patronage, by the learned Dr. *Kennicott*. Though the preſent verſion, as conveying every eſſential

tial doctrine, and containing no material errors, is doubtleſs adequate to its main intent; yet in a book of this momentous ſort, the mind certainly would receive a peculiar pleaſure and ſatisfaction in the idea of our having a *correct* text, and *that* probably illuſtrated with as copious and learned explanations, as could be produced from the whole ſtores of biblical literature *.

Were this effected, we might then look forward to ſome other neceſſary undertakings for the ſervice of religion, which would naturally ſuggeſt themſelves on the

* The collation is now completed, and we have had a ſpecimen of what may be done by this propoſed reviſion in the tranſlation lately given us of *Iſaiah*; the ſuperior merit of which muſt create new deſire in every lover of religion, to ſee it followed by as happy an illuſtration of the whole Old Teſtament. There ſeems, however, at preſent, to be a very unpleaſing and unpromiſing inattention to this ſort of buſineſs in the guardians of the ſtate, who, one would think, if they could not occaſionally give it the *prime* place in their councils, might, at ſome time or other, deem it worthy of notice, as an *underpart*, and *for once* permit the meeting of an *effective* convocation, for an end not more neceſſary than *conſtitutional*.

occaſion.

occaſion. The New Teſtament, as far as it needs it, might undergo a like reviſion; and then, what if the whole were ſucceeded with a thorough examination, and, in ſome ſort, a new modelling of the liturgy? which its greateſt admirers muſt own contains a number of palpable blemiſhes, and recognizes ſome points of doctrine in a manner too high-toned and pertinacious.

With regard to the Old and New Teſtaments, it is very deſirable, when a reviſed tranſlation of them is publiſhed for the uſe of the common people, to have it accompanied with a few neceſſary notes, to obviate the moſt apparent difficulties, and explain thoſe paſſages which have reference to cuſtoms and phraſes peculiar to the times and places in which they were firſt written. Other editions, for the ſake of thoſe who would wiſh to enter more deeply into the knowledge of ſcripture, might be publiſhed with an approved paraphraſe and comment, enriched with the beſt illuſtrations that could be collected from learned writers either at home or abroad.

The language of our Common Prayer

is incomparably well adapted to the purpoſes of devotion, and in that reſpect can poſſibly admit of no improvement. But in point of form and accuracy, it certainly has great deficiencies, to which it is high time, on many obvious accounts, to pay ſome attention. Something ſurely, either of uſe or beauty, might be given to it by our better knowledge of ſome particulars of religion, and improved ſtate of literature. But of all the canonical productions of our church, the *Thirty-nine Articles* ſeem to want new-modelling the moſt. Beſides their obſcurities and equivocations, they want plan and uniformity. Though perhaps not much amiſs in orthodoxy as they appear in ſome approved expoſitions, yet neither the pious nor ingenious can at preſent receive much ſatisfaction in peruſing them. And yet, I ſhould imagine, a ſet might be drawn up which would highly pleaſe the rational believer, and ſincere member of the eſtabliſhed church. And one thing I cannot but ſuggeſt in this place, which is, that, as the matter is of different kinds and degrees of importance,

it would have a good effect to claſs the articles under ſuch different general titles, as would beſt conduce to clearneſs and order, and to that ſatisfaction of mind, which is ever received from moderation, method, and preciſion.

Were theſe deſirable improvements completed, the times favourable, and our clergy, as a body, encouraged to undertake it, not only by royal countenance (for that need not be doubted) but by that of the people, and their repreſentatives, there is *yet* an opening left to do a ſervice to our moſt holy religion of the higheſt kind; which is of the moſt obvious nature, and which ſcarce the commoneſt ſubject of enquiry has not received from its admirers. What I mean is, a review of the variety of tracts and ſermons in the Engliſh tongue, which are generally allowed to happily illuſtrate the ſcripture, or explain and enforce its doctrines; and then, if a ſelection of them ſhould be thought too voluminous a work for republication; books of contents, indexes, and references of various kinds, might be made, ſo as to give every one,

deſirous to be informed, the opportunity of knowing, *where* and by *what* author any text or point of doctrine was beſt explained and enforced, *&c.* The very learned, indeed, might not want theſe helps, but to the leſs ſo, they would certainly yield the higheſt ſatisfaction, if they were not often of the greateſt uſe. For by theſe means they might be led into knowledge they would otherwiſe never have acquired; a knowledge which, whatever the giddy or inconſiderate may think, is in the higheſt degree amuſing, and at the ſame time valuable above any other, ſave that of the ſacred oracles from whence thoſe deſerving luminaries borrowed their original light and information.

NOTE VIII.

WHAT AT PRESENT MOST PREVENTS THE PROGRESS OF RELIGION.

Lines 303, 304.

As this prediĉts, already dim deſcry'd
We ſee deiſtic hardineſs ſubſide.

SINCE the time that the enemies of revelation found their firſt open attacks againſt it were met with a force and addreſs they probably little expected, we have not had many publications directly intended to impeach its truth, or to invalidate its principles. The chief matter of a deiſtical caſt that is now diſſeminated among us, is introduced obliquely into ſome other ſubject, in form of a ſneer, or innuendo; a ſtrain of idle ridicule, or a morſel of more idle refinement. On this account we ſay, that the *hardineſs* of infidelity is on the decline.

But in obſerving this, we are ſorry it cannot be added, that either the knowledge or zeal of chriſtianity is in a ſtate of improvement among us. On the contrary, that they are both much abated, is too evident to need illuſtration. And if we are deſirous to aſcertain the cauſe, we are not ſo much to ſeek for it in the poiſon of profeſſed infidelity, as in the peculiar luxury and diſſipation of the times. It is not ſo much from *diſtruſt* of the truth and efficacy of our holy religion, as from a total *indifference* about any thing of the kind, that we now ſee the generality of men live in the world, as if there were no God, or as if we were only ſent hither to enjoy a few years of ſportive revelry, ardent competition, or indulgent eaſe, and then lie down and die.

This is all as apparent, as the evil is deplorable and alarming. And it may doubtleſs, with the utmoſt truth, be primarily aſcribed to the great change that has happened among us with reſpect to modes of life, and objects of attention; or, in plainer terms, to the great prevalence

of trade and commerce, the luxuries they have produced, and the ſordidneſs, the ambition, and the vanities they have neceſſarily inſpired. From theſe cauſes it proceeds, that parents, if they had the *inclination*, have not the *time*, to ſee their children properly educated in moral and religious principles. Their engagements and amuſements are too numerous and ſeducing, to allow them many moments to beſtow on what perhaps will appear to them an irkſome taſk, as it muſt remind them of ſeveral neglected duties, if not of criminal indulgences.

Thus youth are reared and thrown into the *world:* and what is there now-a-days to be found in the world, that is favourable to religion, that is likely to rectify the miſmanagement of parents, and impreſs on the minds of young people the vanities of this life, and the great importance of the next? Nothing; except the cares of habitual ſordidneſs, the complacency of ſucceſsful projects, the riot of convivial meetings, and the career of headlong ambition, are likely to become the

teachers

teachers of ſimplicity, the encouragers of religious converſation and reſearch.

I would not wiſh to damp induſtrious habits: but it ought to be obſerved, that even our *induſtry* may be carried too far for the intereſts of religion and virtue. Nothing does well in extremes. And it is hard to ſay whether theſe great concerns are more injured by *monaſtic indolence*, than by *ſecular activity*. For, though a proper degree of employment is of great ſervice either in an individual or a nation, in order to prevent the intruſion of evil thoughts and the contagion of bad examples, yet they are ſurely carried too far when they obſtruct the prevalence of good ones. And that this is the caſe at preſent with us, no candid and obſerving perſon can deny. There is a due medium in every thing, and religion loves it as well as virtue. The buſtle of our trade, the buſtle of our politics, and the buſtle of our pleaſures, are too great and intereſting to the mind, to leave it pervious to what will be too apt to ſhew the futility of the greateſt part of our toils and cares, and recal us to duties

of which we have as little reliſh as we have knowledge.

Times thus unfavourable to religious ſentiments and impreſſions, will in ſome degree affect the teachers of the people themſelves. Their morals *may* be injured; but their zeal and induſtry *muſt*. For who can perſiſt with unwearied ardour in unwelcome aſſiduities? The exertions of all men, in all public capacities, muſt depend a good deal on the reception they meet with from the world; and every one muſt now perceive the declining notice (I do not ſay *reverence*) which is paid to our ſpiritual paſtors and maſters.

Conſiderations of this obvious ſort will naturally account for the knowledge and intereſt of religion being materially on the decline. And as this *indifference* appears to do the work of the deiſt, it is very likely one cauſe of his *open* attacks being leſs frequent than they have been.

But perhaps we may diſcover another co-operating cauſe.

The ſingular exceſſes which a too fond and implicit attachment to *any* thing is apt

to

to occaſion, has in *religion* produced ſeveral ſuperſtitions, perhaps ridiculous enough in themſelves; and which in ſome minds may be truly offenſive, though in fact they can now-a-days be ſeldom attended with any material harm. Impreſſed, on ſome account or other, with a particular diſlike to this foible in the religioniſt, there are men, who, with a view to diveſt Chriſtianity of all its ſuperſtitious redundances, have gone ſo far, we preſume, as to injure its genuine principles and eſſential doctrines. The criterion or teſt they pretend to uſe in this purgation, is *reaſon*; and an excellent one it is, when *reaſonably* applied. But the diſlike they entertain to the ſpecies of error they would correct, amounts ſo palpably to a real *prejudice*, that we need not wonder it ſhould prompt them to exceſſes, and, under the name of ſuperſtition and nonſenſe, make them expunge from their creed ſome of the moſt important tenets of Chriſtianity *.

Among

* The following quotation from the work of a great author (perhaps not now-a-days much read) it is preſumed

Among other things of leſs *conſequence*, they view with an adverſe eye what are called the *myſteries* of religion, becauſe the chief of the papal errors were palmed upon the ignorant under that impoſing term. Whatever

ſumed will at once enforce the argument and amuſe the reader.

"The third occaſion of controverſies I obſerve to be an extreme and unlimited deteſtation of ſome former hereſy or corruption of the church already acknowledged and convicted. This was the cauſe that produced the hereſy of Arius, grounded eſpecially upon deteſtation of gentiliſm; leſt the chriſtians ſhould ſeem, by the aſſertion of the equal divinity of our Saviour Chriſt, to approach unto the acknowledgment of more Gods than one. The deteſtation of the hereſy of Arius produced that of Sabellius; who, holding for execrable the diſſimilitude which Arius pretended in the Trinity, fled ſo far from him, as he fell upon that other extremity, to deny the diſtinction of perſons; and to ſay that they were only names of ſeveral offices and diſpenſations. Yea, moſt of the hereſies and ſchiſms of the church have ſprung up of this root; while men have made as it were their ſcale, by which to meaſure the bounds of the moſt perfect religion; taking it by the fartheſt diſtance from the error laſt condemned. Theſe be *poſthumi hæreſium filii*; hereſies that ariſe out of the aſhes of other hereſies that are extinct and amortiſed.

"This

ever is declared the moſt obvious literal meaning of ſcripture (and taught particularly by thoſe ſtyled the *orthodox*) which they cannot thoroughly explain and underſtand, they reject as erroneous, and not entitled to belief. In reading their Bible, they muſt either comprehend the *meaning* of every fact, and the *eſſence* of every thing, or elſe, with them, they have no right to credence. On this account, in order to get quit of the difficulty they often find, of either foregoing their firſt principle, or admitting the myſterious

"This manner of apprehenſion doth in ſome degree poſſeſs many in our times. They think it the true touchſtone to try what is good and evil, by meaſuring what is more or leſs oppoſite to the inſtitutions of the church of Rome, be it ceremony, be it policy, or government: yea, be it other inſtitutions of greater weight, that is ever moſt perfect which is removed moſt degrees from that church; and that is ever polluted and blemiſhed, which participateth in any appearance with it. This is a ſubtile and dangerous conceit for men to entertain; apt to delude themſelves, more apt to delude the people, and moſt apt of all to calumniate their adverſaries."

Lord Bacon on Church Controverſies.

point, they try the words ſaid to contain it with every engine of interpretation they can invent, from the conceptions of ſimple *figure*, up to the intimations of *myſticiſm* itſelf.

But why theſe objections to the belief of what we cannot fully underſtand? Is the natural world without its myſteries? Why preſuppoſe that a revelation from God concerning his ways with man, and the means of working out our ſalvation, muſt be free from any thing which we cannot adequately comprehend? Certainly what is *dark* may be revealed to us as well as what is *clear*; and the probability is, on a juſt conſideration, that ſuch communication would not be, in every reſpect, level to our capacities and knowledge. How this is, therefore, depends upon the *fact*, and not on our *pre-conceptions*. And if men of the beſt ſenſe and learning, after more than a thouſand years trial, can be ſuppoſed equal to the taſk of diſcovering what is taught us in the ſcriptures, it *does* unfold ſeveral *facts*, and refer to ſeveral *things*, which no human reaſon can fully com-

comprehend and explain. Theſe prepoſſeſſions, then, which will not admit a *myſtery* into revelation, are palpably ill-founded *prejudices*; and the *Rational Chriſtians*, or *Socinians*, as they call themſelves, on this account, ought perhaps to be more eſteemed its enemies than its friends. Common ſenſe, on the firſt glance, conceives of them thus equivocally; and the moſt able and candid judges muſt ever claſs them a good deal on the ſide of deiſm. For a deiſt and a rationaliſt ſeem only to differ in this, that the latter rejects a part of what the former rejects in the whole *.

To

* The following ſhort and neat account of the matter is ſo much to the purpoſe, that I cannot but tranſcribe it. It is taken from a late publication by a learned and admired author, who conveys the beſt conſidered and moſt ingenious train of thought, in the ſimpleſt purity and elegance of ſtyle.

" The fundamental articles of the goſpel are pro-
" poſed to us, as objects of faith, not as ſubjects of
" enquiry. As they proceed from the Source of light
" and truth, they are founded, no doubt, in the higheſt
" reaſon; but they are for the moſt part, at leaſt in
" many reſpects, inſcrutable to our reaſon. It is
" enough

To prove that chriſtianity is not *myſterious*, or that no portion of its vital efficacy reſts on faith in myſteries, has been attempted of late by ſeveral able ſectaries of the above-named denomination; but with very little ſucceſs among the truly learned. And

" enough that we ſee cauſe to admit the revelation " itſelf, upon the evidences given of it: it is not ne- " ceſſary that we ſhould carry our reſearches any far- " ther. It is not ſafe, or decent, or practicable, in " many caſes, to do it. The juſt and ſober reaſoner is " careful to proceed on clear and diſtinct ideas, and " to ſtop where theſe fail him. But how ſoon does " he arrive at this point? For the ſublime genius of " chriſtianity reminds him, at almoſt every ſtep, how " impoſſible it is, with the ſcanty line of human rea- " ſon, to fathom *the deep things of God*; and repreſſes " the ſallies of his wit and fancy with this reflection " —*How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways* " *paſt finding out!* In a word, where he finds the ſub- " ject too obſcure for his underſtanding to penetrate, " or too vaſt for his ideas to comprehend (and he pre- " ſently finds this, when he attempts to reaſon on the " myſteries of the chriſtian faith) he checks his en- " quiries; he believes, and adores in ſilence.

" But now this ſilence, this adoration, is ill ſuited " to the reſtleſs ambition of the human mind, where it " aſpires to the reputation of profound and extenſive " knowledge. The vain reaſoner would ſignalize " himſelf

And though they are the moſt violent enemies of what is called orthodoxy, their zeal does not ſeem to be according to knowledge; any more than the endeavours they uſe to make the ſcriptures ſpeak what they think they ſhould ſpeak, rather than what they do ſpeak, is a mark of wiſdom and candour.

Indeed, when theſe rational arguments are carefully examined, their plauſibility will be found to lie often only in an ambiguous uſe of the word *reaſon*; which at one time relates to the proofs on which we aſſert the authority of revelation, or

" himſelf on all ſubjects, the moſt abſtruſe and myſte-
" rious, in preference to others; and fears not to carry
" his preſumptuous enquiries to the ſeat and throne of
" God. He queſtions the revealed truths of the goſ-
" pel as freely as any other; and finding them many
" times inexplicable by the principles of human
" ſcience, he triumphs in the diſcovery, applauds his
" own reach of thought, and dazzles the world into
" a high opinion of his wit and parts. The truth is,
" he decides on ſubjects which he does not, and can-
" not, underſtand: but the world ſees he decides upon
" them; and that is generally enough to attract its
" admiration and eſteem."

Vide Biſhop HURD's Serm. Vol. II. Ser. iv.

its

its verbal meaning; and at another has reference to the grounds of the diſpenſation, or the nature of a thing ſaid to be revealed. For when once a ſtrong idea of the neceſſity of Reaſon (or of a rational conviction) in the former of theſe ſenſes, is impreſſed on the reader's mind (and the very evident truth of ſuch neceſſity eaſily gives it this force)—it is not hard, by carrying the impreſſion into a province where the word has the latter ſenſe, to make what is *myſterious* appear *unreaſonable*.

That this is frequently the caſe in Socinian writings, the competent and candid reader muſt allow: moreover theſe *three* particulars, I think, cannot but manifeſt themſelves to him. *Firſt*, that as frequently as the opinions of the eſtabliſhed church are the objects of ridicule from that quarter, its ſupporters, on the whole, have proved themſelves by much the more rational interpreters of holy writ. *Secondly*, that on account of their number, abilities, learning, and induſtry—their candid ſpirit, and critical ſkill—if they have not

not been able truly to point out its eſſential doctrines (and alſo give the beſt key to thoſe that are more recondite and dubious) it is ſcarce reaſonable to hope ſuch a thing will ever be accompliſhed without ſupernatural aſſiſtance. And, *thirdly*, that, ſince they had their riſe, there have been by the Socinians many more bigotted, unſcholar-like, and ſilly things written (if we may ſo ſpeak) *at* orthodoxy than *in* it.

But, without entering farther into the merits of the queſtion, I ſhall here make a ſingle remark, for the ſake of which the ſubject was principally introduced into this note. Though we allow that theſe ſectaries may ſee their *rational* interpretations of ſcripture with an eye in ſome ſort favourable to real chriſtianity; yet there is a great chance, that to others, who have not the ſame view of things, ſuch equivocal writings may be very injurious to it, and virtually make their parade of *ſcience* and *philoſophy* operate on the ſide of deiſm.

Thus, then, Socinianiſm may hurt chriſtianity:

tianity: and if the deiſt do not ſome time carry on his attacks in that character, he may on this account (as well as on account of our depravity and licentiouſneſs) be the leſs anxious to attain that through violent means, which he ſees going forward by thoſe which are more gentle and efficacious.

Notwithſtanding theſe unfavourable circumſtances, we have, however, in the text intimated, that on the whole there is *yet* a proſpect of chriſtianity eminently gaining ground among us. Should not this after all appear to the reader as a likely expectation, it is becauſe we have omitted to bring to his recollection *one* very natural human event. When religious knowledge is adequately underſtood, what is or can be hoſtile to its truth powerfully expoſed, and ſeveral other accompanying circumſtances are in a favourable train; that is, when the *head* is right, and the *heart* only miſled; there is then but ſome revolution of affairs to take place (which the courſe of things may eaſily bring about

ere we are aware) that will in a good measure cure us of our *vanity* and *vice*; and we may, at this age of the world, perhaps, reasonably augur a *final* as well as a *general* end to the progress of infidelity.

January, 1775.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT I.

NOTE IX.

REMARKS ON DR. PRIESTLEY'S EXAMINATION OF THE DRS. REID, BEATTIE, AND OSWALD.

Lines 151, 152.

And Arts perverted yield the vain pretence
To cope with Truths made known by Common Senſe.

AS the contents of a recent publication*, materially oppoſing one deſign of this epiſtle, induce me to deviate a little from the original plan of theſe notes, I take oc-

* *Examination of the Drs. Reid, Beattie, and Oſwald*, 1774, publiſhed in the beginning of 1775.

caſion

caſion in this place to ſignify my opinion of its merits, and how far I am a convert to the author's way of thinking.—Beſides the neceſſity of this declaration, there are readers to whom I imagine its purport will not be unſerviceable.

It is the well known doctrine of *Locke*, that the human mind, before experience, or as it comes immediately from the hands of its Maker, is like an empty cabinet, or ſheet of white paper, unpoſſeſſed of any *idea* or *character* whatever; and that it acquires all its after furniture from *ſenſation* and *reflection*; that is, from the perception of the impreſſions of external objects on the ſenſes, and the perception of its own operations in the various acts of thinking. From feeling and conſciouſneſs, he ſays, we are ſatisfied of the truth of our own exiſtence, and the exiſtence of ideal impreſſions. But all further *beliefs*, as well as *judgments*, he tell us, are to be acquired by *reaſon*, or by a *compariſon* of ideas, and an attention to their *agreement* or *diſagreement*; of which we have an *intuitive* perception.

On theſe few principles he builds his mental ſyſtem, and thinks them ſufficient to account for all that variety and extent of knowledge which ſo highly dignifies and adorns our nature. Hence he is led (with *Hobbes*) to adopt the ſelfiſh ſcheme of morals; and his diſciples to contend (with *Des Cartes* and *Malebranche*) that we ought to believe nothing without being compelled to it by the moſt ſcrupulous inveſtigation.

A theory ſo ſimple and plauſible in itſelf, highly flattering to the vanity of human penetration, and uſhered into the world by a writer of the firſt eminence, made it generally read and adopted. But its ſucceſs did not in every reſpect prove to the wiſhes of the ingenious and worthy author. He did not foreſee that this *ideal ſyſtem* (as it is called) would become the prolific parent of paradox and ſcepticiſm; and that it ultimately tended to deſtroy all *belief*, even in the moſt obvious certainties of common ſenſe. Yet this on the experiment has proved the caſe. Inſtead of introducing into the philoſophy of human

nature

nature the clearneſs and ſatisfaction expected, it occaſioned endleſs perplexity and doubt. Truths, which had been believed and revered for ages, were now conſidered as the impoſitions of credulity, or the falſe concluſions of an unſound logic; and that we could not be ſure of our own perſonal identity, the exiſtence of a material world, and the freedom of our actions, were but a few of the paradoxes drawn from theſe favourite principles. Metaphyſics became one of the moſt popular ſtudies; and to admit nothing unaccompanied with refined and ſubtle proof, was eſteemed the mark of an improved and candid underſtanding.

The tendency and incompleteneſs of this theory did not however eſcape the notice of the learned. But perhaps, through the ſymptoms of other paſſions appearing in their objections than the love of truth, and ſome indications of an undiſtinguiſhing deſire to overthrow ſo popular a reputation, what was true in their ſtrictures became generally neglected. A few, however, of the learned, both abroad and at

home, ſtood aloof, and, as occaſion ſerved, have laid open ſome of its errors in the moſt ſatisfactory and candid manner.

Theſe overſights are chiefly with reſpect to certain *beliefs*, *feelings*, and *inſtinctive ſuggeſtions*, which they ſay are connate with the human mind, one of its chief characteriſtics, and the ſource of numberleſs of our moſt amiable and ſatisfactory principles of action. On them is founded a variety of truths, which can have no proof from the above noted *compariſon of ideas*, or any ſtrict *logical deductions*. They are the preceptions of *common ſenſe*, and yet as indubitable in themſelves as the intuitive axioms of geometry; and what none deny in their conduct, however they may be diſpoſed to do it in words.

Of late, the exiſtence and validity of theſe mental properties have been much inſiſted upon. And though the variety of their kinds, and the delicacy of their operations, have thus far prevented a ſyſtematic accuracy in their names and deſcriptions, we have reaſon to hope, the theory of the human underſtanding will ſhortly obtain an

an equal perfection with what belongs to other provinces of ſpeculative enquiry.

In the inveſtigation and hiſtory of theſe powers of the mind, it is well known the Drs. *Reid*, *Oſwald*, and the author addreſſed in the above lines, have eminently ſignalized themſelves: and if we ſhould not allow their writings free from imperfection, the general ſuffrage of the learned has admitted their aims as laudable, and their doctrines as materially true.

Dr. *Prieſtley*, however, in the publication alluded to above, has thought proper to call theſe principles of *common ſenſe* (as they are termed) in queſtion, and to attack their ingenious defenders with a boldneſs of reprehenſion, which much ſuperior reaſoning than his could never juſtify; and with an indecency of language, which nothing ſurely of the gentleman could adopt. He calls it, indeed, treating them as they have treated others: but this aſſertion is only a mark of that want of accuracy of diſtinction in a material circumſtance, which, I apprehend, will be readily found

to characterize ſome other parts of his volume.

The *living* character*, which *one* of them treats with ſuch animated, though genteel cenſure, is an avowed enemy to Chriſtianity; and his writings tend to deprive us of almoſt every ſoothing certainty. The ſportiveneſs with which *another* may have uſed the notions of two or three worthy authors, can now have no effect upon their minds, ſince they are *no more*. And as to the general ridicule which all of them may have endeavoured to throw upon certain popular opinions—if theſe opinions are by ſome of the beſt judges either thought to be laughable, known to be uſeleſs, or feared to be dangerous, there is certainly nothing improper in its application. As by preſcription they are open to all kinds of treatment, ſo by nature they are exempt from pain. We conclude, therefore, that though ridicule be not allowed the teſt of truth, it is doubtleſs a lawful inſtrument of free diſcuſſion;

* *Hume* died ſince the writing of this tract.

and

and that the ſeverity of theſe writers can only be *felt* where it is highly deſerved.

Now how ſtands our Examiner's conduct compared with this? He has heaped no common abuſe on ſome of the warmeſt friends of religion, for, at worſt, a miſtaken deſire to defend it. He has directed the poignancy of his *wit* againſt the boſom of *living* worth, and loaded his pages with ſuch perſonal and illiberal terms as theſe, —*pride, arrogance, bigotry, ignorance, airs of ſelf-ſufficiency, contempt of predeceſſors*, &c. And, as he can ſee little in theſe *aſſuming* and *pretended* philoſophers (as he calls them) but *inſolence, ſuperciliouſneſs, groſs abuſe, Quixotiſm, rant, quibble*, and *miſrepreſentation*, &c. ſo he is led (conſiſtently enough in this reſpect) to declare, that he cannot read their works without *aſtoniſhment, indignation*, and *contempt*. Let Dr. Prieſtley, or any of his friends, ſeriouſly examine theſe oppoſed *manners of writing* by the rule of *agreement and diſagreement of ideas*, and then determine whether he has treated them as they have treated

others *. But though I fancy he can claim no right in this ſpecies of apology, I am perſuaded it will juſtify great freedom of ſtyle in any one who ſhall chuſe to animadvert upon *his own* performance; to a ſlight view of the ſpirit of which we now proceed.

He is diſingenuous enough to paſs over the material and eſſential parts of their works: and thoſe who have read them with impartiality, I am ſatisfied, will find that his deſultory criticiſms have frequent-

* It might have been expected, that an interval of ſix or eight years would, in ſome degree, have ſoftened the Doctor's diſlike to his *north country* opponents; eſpecially as they had not in the mean time uttered one polemical ſyllable to fan the fire of contention. This however has not been the caſe. In his late *Diſquiſitions*, *Correſpondence*, and *Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever*, they and their doctrines are again recognized with the ſame unbecoming ſpirit. *Still* he pretends to be hurt, that their principles lead (by what forced *route* I know not) to *Atheiſtical* concluſions. But how much muſt it ſtartle every thing candid and conſiſtent in the reader to find, that in the above-named *Letters* he treats the *avowed* atheiſt, HAMMON, not only with civil language, but with complaiſance and reſpect!

ly

ly their riſe either from miſconception or miſrepreſentation. He labours to make it appear, that their doctrines are unfriendly to all proper reaſoning; that the *common ſenſe* they contend for is but another name for *opinion* or *fancy*; and that they hold "*every* one authoriſed to pronounce deci-"ſively upon *every* queſtion, according to "his preſent feeling and perſuaſion." But though this idea of their principles furniſhes out the moſt plauſible part of his harangue, it is far from being a juſt one: nay, I aſſert that it is a moſt injurious and diſingenuous one. Their writings are intended to ſhew, that there are *certain* feelings, or inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of the mind, which in *certain* caſes, under *certain* circumſtances of operation, are as authoritative in themſelves, and have always had as powerful an influence over human conduct, as the deductions of the ſtricteſt reaſoning. They do not pretend to *diſcard* this reaſoning, as an improper handmaid to Truth: their deſign is to ſhew its genuine province, and introduce to our better acquaintance an older ſiſter, who has an equal right

to

to decide in this intereſting province of human attention. They endeavour to unfold a part of the mental frame, overlooked by *Locke* and his followers, which, though leſs obvious in its procedure (philoſophically conſidered) than the immediate ideas of ſenſation and reflection, has nevertheleſs as real an exiſtence as they; and as *reaſonable* a title to be believed in its *ſuggeſtions*, as they have in their *perceptions*. For an inſtance or two of this, out of a number of others deduced in the preſent enquiry—They contend, that the ſimple *feelings* we have of our own exiſtence and identity, the exiſtence of a material world, and the freedom of our actions, are as ſtrong and perſuaſive, and ought to be as ſoon credited, as any reaſoning can make them; and what ſhould never give up their beliefs, though reaſon (as it frequently has done of late) ſhould conclude againſt them.

Such, in general, is the deſign of theſe ingenious and worthy writers. And were it once clearly ſhewn, which ſpecies of truths require the ſtricteſt forms of logic

in the inveſtigation, and which the equally ſatisfactory proofs of theſe original feelings; it is very juſtly apprehended, that the diſcovery would be of the utmoſt ſervice in deſtroying the pernicious growth of modern ſcepticiſm and infidelity. And then, when admitted into the genuine code of philoſophy, could our Examiner blame mankind if they made it a branch of education, and held it to be worthy of as timely and ſedulous an enforcement, as he imagines requiſite to the formation of a true, *intrepid*, and *philoſophical neceſſitarian** ?

Dr. *Prieſtley* ſeems to think the ſimplicity, the long and general reputation of *Locke*'s theory, ſhould render it too ſacred even to be ſuſpected of error, much more to be publicly arraigned †. How this quadrates with his avowed love of free enquiry and intimate knowledge of ſome other parts of nature, is hard to be conceived. As to *ſimplicity*, the moſt erroneous ſyſtems of philoſophy have generally

* Vide Preface, p. xv. firſt edition.

† Ibid. p. lix. vii. ix.

had

had that recommendation in the higheſt degree. It is not long ſince almoſt every operation in the material world was accounted for by the *Newtonian attraction* and *repulſion*. Yet ſubſequent experience found theſe favourite principles very defective; and, what is more, inſtead of a like ſimplicity, it diſcovered that the moſt narrow province of enquiry exhibited ſuch a number of properties, laws, &c. as make the knowledge of them no eaſy attainment.

Though nature may be ſaid to delight in the *ſimplicity* of her principles, yet ſhe equally delights in the *variety* of her provinces. And as theſe provinces are many in the *material* world, they may be equally numerous in the *mental*. This conſidered, and that, generally, *laws of operation* are as uſeful a part of knowledge as the principles from whence they proceed, it will be reckoned, I ſhould think, little credit to a theory of the mind, to contain no more fundamental truths than the confined ſcience of numbers. And, after every effort of philoſophy, it will probably be obliged

obliged to allow, that what is admirable in nature, is more the deeply-hidden energies with which it is replete, the wiſdom and contrivance ſhewn in the adjuſtment of its parts and operations, than the paucity of (what our narrow-ſightedneſs muſt be obliged to call) its firſt principles.

Hence, were one only to gueſs at what would be the reſult of the moſt accurate deſcription of the mind, one would ſcarce be induced to think it would contain a leſs quantity of important particulars, than what are laid open in the anatomy of the body. And to what a large catalogue theſe have already been extended (while the ſubject is ſtill acknowledged to be imperfectly underſtood) few naturaliſts need to be informed. A ſimplicity of the kind in queſtion deals too much in generals to be either accurate or inſtructive; and let Dr. *Prieſtley* here coolly recollect (what I intimate with pleaſure) the *number* of ingenious diſcoveries he has made in *two* or *three* departments of nature, and he will perhaps think more favourably of attempts

to

to improve our knowledge in another, at leaſt equally important.

The principles in diſpute are alſo blamed for being liable to error and abuſe in their application. But muſt not this, in ſome meaſure, be the caſe of every mental theory, diſcovered and applied by imperfect rationality? It is a taſk entailed upon ſuperior ſenſe to correct, as far as poſſible, the errors of inferior; and where ſyſtems are compared, we have no regard to perfection, but preference.

Our examiner pretends likewiſe to fear the evidences of revelation will ſuffer from theſe *new* and offenſive principles *. But I apprehend, even from ſome parts of his preſent volume, that his fears rather agree in kind with thoſe of the poor biſhop of Worceſter, which I dare ſay he has not often read in *Locke* without a ſmile. The principles in debate are advanced as being peculiarly favourable to religion; and there are readers, I make no doubt, who will be inclined to think they eſpy more calumny

* See Preface, p. ix.

than

than verity in what our author has inſinuated to the contrary.—When *prejudice* holds the pen, its graphic wanderings are not always to be aſcribed to mere viſual incapacity.

Had not the Doctor been influenced in his animadverſions by ſome powerful prejudice, it is almoſt impoſſible to conceive how he ſhould declare himſelf to be highly pleaſed with infidel writings †, becauſe the enquiries they produce tend ultimately to the ſervice of religion; and yet to be ſo highly diſpleaſed that a like freedom (which might alſo have had a like ſucceſs) ſhould be taken with a popular ſyſtem of the mind. It appears he can admit into his friendſhip thoſe whoſe metaphyſical creeds differ much from his own ‡; and I think he has not been able to diſcover any thing in the writers he attacks with ſo much illiberal vehemence, that did not entitle them to a ſimilar indulgence.

To what motive, but an inveterate prejudice, can we attribute the indiſcreet

† Exam. p. 192. ‡ Ibid. p. 151.

choice

choice of a mode of writing, whoſe alternative is, that, if he do not make his authors appear *inſolent innovators, &c.* it muſt *cover his head with infamy*, and lay him under the indelible diſgrace of a *weak or wicked oppoſer of new and important truth**? Surely a metaphyſical controverſy, among *the friends of Chriſtianity*, might have been carried on without the leaſt hazard of ſuch diſagreeable conſequences. *Reputation* has been eſteemed by many as valuable as *life*; and if to hazard the latter, either raſhly or for *for the point of honour*, be condemned by every thing prudent and religious; to riſk the former with a like wantonneſs, muſt deſerve a like cenſure. But the times, perhaps, require that *every* thing ſhould have a proper ſeaſoning of *ſpirit* to gain a wiſhed attention. And ſomething, perhaps, ought to be aſcribed to the polemical eſcapes of a pen, habituated to the public diſputes which are at this time but too common. We allow there is ſomething extenuating in thoſe pleas;

* See Preface, p. iv.

but

but lament that Dr. *Prieſtley* ſhould ever ſtand in need of them.

In this ſupport of the authors animadverted upon by the Doctor, it is imagined there is no occaſion to aſſert *they* are free from error, or that *he* is always in the wrong. In his ſkirmiſhes with detached ſentences, he may now and then gain the victory; and *one* or all of them may have extended their principles a little too far, and yet *he* be to blame, and they deſerve well of the public. How far this is the caſe, muſt be left to the deciſion of that tribunal which it is now before: to whoſe judgment of the *matter* of this controverſy, as well as *manner*, notwithſtanding the many arts of active ſingularity, I muſt own I look forward with no alarming expectations. I have no doubt but the ſenſible Public will eaſily ſee, that this *candid* Examination was entered upon with intent to find fault; and that it is ſo conducted, that no one, unacquainted with the works he criticizes, could gather from it the real principles and deſigns of their authors. I have no doubt but the capable reader will

eaſily ſee, in ſpite of the graces of *irony*, *ſatire*, and *aſperity* *, ſo copiouſly diffuſed in this tract, to prevent, as he ſays, *tediouſneſs*, *inſipidity*, and *diſguſt* †; that it wants one eſſential ingredient of good writing, which they can but ill ſupply, and for which no *facility* in the art of book-making can atone.

As to the little ſtricture here thrown out, I flatter myſelf a regard for the worthy characters thus indecently arraigned and miſrepreſented, and a natural concern for the fate of ſome *favourite opinions*, will be my excuſe both with the world and our learned Examiner. And if it ſhould not be a prelude to more weighty reproof from the parties ſo boldly challenged to the field; if one of the faireſt opportunities of critical recrimination be overlooked that controverſy ever offered, ſince vanity was prone to *give itſelf ridiculous airs*, and prejudice to *clothe mere calumny in rant* ‡, the Doctor may think

* Remarks, p. 190. † Preface, p. xxv.

‡ Some of the Doctor's own terms, p. 278.

himſelf

himſelf not altogether unhappy in *ſome* properties of ſtyle, and peculiarities of opinion *.

In fine, reſpecting the main purport of what he has objected, I have no doubt of his ſincerity, and believe him to be a zealous friend of religion. But ſince he has ſhewn, in the work before us, that theſe qualities deſerve very little attention in an *animated* queſt of truth, I hold it as unneceſſary to apologize to him for a ſimilar, though far inferior degree of *warmth*, as it muſt be unavailing to urge a *ſincerity* and *zeal*, which has been ſo ſlender a protection to writers and metaphyſicians who rank far above either Dr. *Prieſtley*, or the humble narrator of his ill-judged quarrel with COMMON SENSE.

* The author has been informed, that the true reaſon of his opponents ſilence is here alluded to.

NOTE X.

THAT MANKIND ARE ENDUED WITH CERTAIN INNATE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES.

Line 242.

Forbid it, Reaſon! and forbid it, LOCKE!

IN the laſt Note we have given ſome account of *Locke*'s Principles of the Human Mind. And in ſupport of what is there alledged againſt their truth, and in reference to the above lines, we will here examine attentively a *ſingle* inſtance, where it is preſumed they are faulty. It relates to a mental property, with which the antients were very well acquainted, and which has been very ſatisfactorily aſcertained by ſeveral ingenious moderns.

There is doubtleſs great plauſibility, and much truth, in *Locke*'s Theory of the Mind; but a deſire to give it an equal degree

gree of *ſimplicity*, has certainly carried his ſupport of it too far, where he endeavours to prove we have *no innate practical principles* *, and that our moral conduct has its riſe wholly from obedience to certain eſtabliſhed laws, or for the attainment of ſome deſirable end; and hence may, in every inſtance, be inveſtigated on the common principles of reaſon. What he underſtands by *practical principles*, he does not formally explain; but what thoſe, who are not ſatisfied with his reaſoning on this ſubject, mean by the term (and what he alſo muſt mean, if he be not trifling with it) is, "originally impreſſed moral biaſes or inſtincts, directing to our own good, and to a proper, equitable, and amiable conduct towards one another;" ſuch as is intimated by the words *juſtice*, *benevolence*, *gratitude*, *piety*, *reſpect to parents*, &c.

A careful appeal to the feelings and operations of our own minds, in this branch of philoſophy, is eſteemed, and muſt always be conſidered, the only method of

* Vide his *Eſſay*, B. I. chap. iii. and iv.

analyſing its principles; and from this appeal, I dare ſay, every capable perſon, who has no ſyſtem to ſupport, will find a ſufficient proof of ſuch internal ſuggeſtions or diſpoſitions as the above, that have had their being prior to any prejudice of education or proceſs of reaſoning.

This doctrine does not imply that of innate ideas. It only ſuppoſes, that from the make and conſtitution of man (both as to mind and body) there will neceſſarily reſult ſome characteriſtic qualities, that, in particular caſes, will certainly lead to ſuch and ſuch actions; and this in the *firſt* inſtance, as well as in any ſubſequent one, which may be ſeconded or heightened in its tendency by *reaſon*, *habit*, &c. Thus, to give one of the plaineſt kind of examples—It will be allowed, I preſume, that a perſon of perfect underſtanding, &c. in danger of being drowned by a fall into a river, would without premeditation throw out his arms, and uſe ſuch exertions as appeared moſt likely to ſave him from deſtruction; and alſo, that he would uſe a ſimilar effort in behalf of another perſon, that

that ſhould chance to fall ſuddenly from his ſide into a like ſituation. Now theſe efforts manifeſt *two* innate practical principles, which may be conveyed in theſe words, *Do thy utmoſt to ſave thyſelf when in danger, and alſo to ſave thy fellow-creature.*

Theſe biaſes are to human beings, in ſome ſort, what natural powers are to common matter. They lie dormant in the eſſence of man (whatever that may be) and are only brought into exiſtence when they meet with a proper object. They differ, therefore, from innate ideas, as much as *powers* differ from *actions*, becauſe it is *action* (i. e. *ſenſation* and *reflection*) which produces ideas. Indeed, that every living creature would have theſe internal biaſes, or principles, might be expected, if we may ſo ſay, without trial; for how is it poſſible that any thing (whether living or dead, rational or irrational) ſhould not, from their *nature*, have ſome certain definite powers or tendencies? Theſe tendencies, then, in man, when deſcribed or put into words, are all that is meant by his innate practical principles: and if we have given

a true ſtatement of the matter, theſe principles muſt form too conſiderable a part of human nature, not to merit great notice in a ſyſtem of morals.

Though it is here preſumed, that the Divine Author of our nature has ſo ordered it, that the biaſes in queſtion will lead to the very conduct which reaſon would both dictate and approve; though, for example, to be *juſt in our dealings, true in our words, benevolent in our actions, &c.* is a reaſonable behaviour (and hence may be ſhewn to be right by a train of reaſoning); yet it does not follow, that there is not a neceſſity for theſe auxiliary moral inſtincts, in order to fix them more certainly in our minds, and manifeſt them more powerfully in our conduct. If we conſider how eaſy it is, in ſome caſes, from different and pretty nearly equally plauſible principles, to inveſtigate by reaſon diametrically oppoſite moral laws, we ſhould, I think, rather conclude, that they were intended by our Maker to be the chief umpires in theſe conteſts; and not only to be the *ready* determiners in numberleſs caſes of conduct, to which

which no precepts have been extended, but a *ſteady* barrier againſt the dangerous overflowings of a licentious ſcepticiſm.

It is true, theſe internal biaſes are not equally ſtrong or apparent, compared with one another, nor perhaps alike powerful in every individual inſtance; but I am ſatisfied, nevertheleſs, that there never was a human creature (of ſound underſtanding) totally without them. And though they do not ſhew themſelves always in our conduct, they may certainly be ſuppoſed to have been preſent to the mind in a caſe of moral turpitude, as well as the concurring *verbal precepts*; which none will ſurely ſay are not frequently unattended to, and wilfully tranſgreſſed. But the final cauſe of ſuch inſtincts not being too powerful to be reſiſted by the force of contending appetites, &c. can certainly never be a problem of difficulty to any who conſider the nature of a *probationary* ſtate.

Our author (rather imprudently, by the bye, for the uniformity of his ſyſtem) acknowledges, that *a deſire of happineſs*, and an *averſion to miſery*, are innate practical principles.

principles. And cannot theſe be diſcovered by reaſon, as well any other? And if we take human happineſs to be (as it certainly ſhould mean in this debate) the enjoyment of an inviting object, which has no foreſeen inevitable miſery conſequent to it, of a ſuperior magnitude to that enjoyment—there are too many inſtances in which this innate principle has been denied by the conduct of individuals: as, for example, marrying a perſon hated, to ſerve ſome momentary purpoſe; and, above all, the tranſgreſſion of the duties of a religion which is fully believed, and which denounces a certain puniſhment for the offence, acknowledged infinitely greater than the pleaſure of the ſeducing gratification. Were not human folly and frailty often thwarting this principle, I apprehend many of the exhortations of the pulpit, and chaſtiſements of the magiſtrate, would be wholly unneceſſary. They have not therefore "conſtantly operated and influenced all our actions without ceaſing; nor may they be obſerved in all perſons, and in all ages, ſteady and univerſal:" hence they

want, as well as thoſe others he combats, that mark of general conſent, on which he lays ſo much ſtreſs, as the beſt criterion of the exiſtence of the principles in queſtion.

But the limits of a note will not permit a full examination of this important enquiry. I will therefore only add my opinion, that, along with ſome others of a like nature, the following particulars may be clearly made out againſt *Locke*; and that, as to *this* ſubject of his moſt valuable book, he has in the ſupport of it uſed ſome trifling quibbles, and much weak argument; and has neither placed the matter in an advantageous light, nor taken the beſt method of giving it a candid ſcrutiny. The particulars which I think may be ſupported againſt this reſpectable author are theſe:

(1.) That, in the language of the apoſtle, we have *a law written in our hearts*; or certain moral inſtincts (as well as the counteracting *appetites*, which he allows) originally given us by nature, and eſtabliſhed without any reaſoning or exerciſe of the mind.—(2.) That, though they may not always

always appear in our conduct, they ſtill live in our conſciences; and that the actions of men are by no means ſatisfactory interpreters of their moral opinions.—(3.) That the ignorance many may ſeem to be in, concerning innate practical principles, and the ſlowneſs of aſſent with which others may ſeem to receive them, are not proofs that they are not native and general impreſſions.—(4.) That, from an inherent moral ſenſe, virtue meets with our approbation, and without any regard to its being *profitable* or advantageous to mankind.—(5.) That, if he has not in part miſtaken, he has at leaſt exaggerated, the account he gives of the immoral and directly oppoſite opinions concerning right and wrong, which are ſaid to obtain in different countries.—(6.) That it is no objection to the exiſtence of innate practical principles, that they are not eaſily to be reduced to a fixed catalogue, and do not meet with an univerſal conſent and practice.—(7.) That it is not neceſſary to ſuppoſe us to have innate ideas (as our author deſcribes them) in order to have the innate

nate moral diſpoſitions under conſideration. —(8.) Laſtly, that the full and firm belief of a God is greatly brought about by native ſuggeſtions, or biaſes of the mind, as well as by the uſual methods of enforcing it by reaſon.

Though no deference is expected to be paid to the aſſertions juſt enumerated, yet I fancy enough has been urged in this note to ſatisfy an unprejudiced mind of the exiſtence of the moral biaſes contended for; and that therefore the writer cenſured in the laſt article, who abſolutely denies them, cannot be altogether ſound in his *metaphyſical* creed.

Such deviations of *Locke* from his theory, as the exceptions to the doctrine of no innate practical principles above-mentioned, have been generally thought owing to the power and evidence of truth; either as revealing itſelf by unexpected glimpſes, or as extorting unawares what was not deſigned to be diſcloſed. Our author, however, rather imagines them the infirmities of his maſter. Speaking of *Locke* (p. 5.) he ſays, "Other things he has adopted

ed and taken for granted concerning the mind, which are not well founded; and I think he has been too haſty in concluding, that there are ſome other ſources of our ideas beſides the external ſenſes." So ſtaunch an advocate is the Doctor for a mental ſyſtem, which flatters our diſcurſory faculties, as the ſole exhibitors of truth; and ſo fearful is he of its being adulterated with inſtincts, which remind us of the animal part of our nature!

February, 1775.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT II.

NOTE XI.

Lines 57, 58.

Yet moſt ſuch Proteus images betray,
Where Syſtem ſpreads its bold creative ſway.

SINCE the time the foregoing part of this tract was put into its preſent form, the author animadverted on in the two laſt notes has laid before the public certain *Philoſophical Diſquiſitions*; of which our preſent undertaking, as well as what has juſt been ſaid of his former work, requires that we take ſome notice. Theſe Diſquiſitions (which manifeſt that time has greatly improved the author's controverſial ſtyle, and metaphyſical acumen) relate to two intricate ſubjects, *Matter and Spirit, Liberty and Neceſſity*;

Neceſſity; and we beg leave to lengthen our notes with the following general obſervations on their worth and tendency.

In what the difference between animate and inanimate nature conſiſts, or what it is that enables men to *perceive* and *think*, has always been a ſubject of enquiry, and concerning which the ignorant, as well as the learned, will ever be forming conjectures. On the firſt bluſh of the compariſon it *appears* to all, that there is ſomething in a living creature very different from the clod of earth of which it is viſibly compoſed; and as no *accidental* or *artificial* form into which ordinary matter has been thrown, ever made the *leaſt* approach towards exhibiting the characteriſtic appearances of life and ſenſe, it has been conſtantly and generally judged, that the vital and thinking principle proceeds from ſomething *ſuperadded* to matter, and that it is not the effect of any peculiar *modification*. What that ſomething is, philoſophers pretend not to explain, any further than by diveſting it of all the viſible qualities of matter,

matter, and giving it a *negative* rather than a *poſitive* definition.

That there is *ſomething* in man that conſtitutes the baſes of thought and perception, whoſe eſſence and attributes are different from thoſe of matter, called *ſpirit* or *ſoul*, which ſomehow can act in union with it—has ever been the moſt current opinion, both with philoſophers and the vulgar. The writings of *Baxter* and *Clarke* on the ſubject have been moſtly thought to ſupport this notion with an evidence little ſhort of demonſtration; and what is mentioned on the ſubject in *holy writ* tends ſtrongly to confirm it.

Obvious indeed muſt the ſubject be, on which all mankind concur in opinion; and ſingular its fate, if it have not been inveſtigated through the mediums of all poſſible ſorts of hypotheſes. The validity of the above *feeling*, *reaſoning*, and *authority*, have been called in queſtion; and it has been occaſionally argued, that thought and perception may ariſe from a peculiar modification of ordinary matter. *Simmias* in *Plato* ſupports this opinion; and the

author of the tract juſt noticed has brought it forward again in an elaborate treatiſe, as a doctrine which ſtands on the moſt rational grounds in itſelf, and which beſt harmonizes with what we already know of natural and divine things.

We muſt expect to find ſomething plauſible in every philoſophic theory, which can induce a perſon of ingenuity to lay it before the public; and ſeveral of the reaſons the Doctor has given in ſupport of that which he has undertaken to prove, do not want force. Yet ſtill, on the whole, it is encumbered with many, many difficulties. The leading principle, That what we call Matter is nothing but powers and properties, unſupported by any ſubſtance, is not ſufficiently proved, but in a good meaſure arbitrarily aſſumed. The deduction proceeds through too dark a path of abſtract reaſoning to ſatisfy the mind that every ſtep is indubitably right; and the inference fairly reſulting from the whole, That God himſelf may be, or is probably, a material being (*i. e.* ſome kind of properties without a *ſubſtratum*) is too harſh (to ſay

ſay no worſe of it) in idea, to permit us to embrace ſo bold an hypotheſis.

On comparing the degree of plauſibility of this theory with that of the theory it is intended to ſubvert, I preſume the impartial will find it neither ſo *ſatisfactory* on the whole, nor ſo *equally* clear in the proceſs; hence, on the laws of chance, it is not ſo likely to be right. But were the odds in its favour, where is the cogency of ſuch dark metaphyſical reaſoning to gain our *full* aſſent to its concluſions? When this ſpecies of deduction meets the concurrence of the mind, it is when the reſults agree with opinions which are either thought harmleſs in themſelves, revered for their antiquity and general acceptance, or which are countenanced by the voice of revelation; and this is doubtleſs a rational conceſſion. There can be no harm in admitting the plauſible concluſions of any ſpecies of reaſoning, which concurs with opinions which have been already embraced on theſe grounds; but there may be great danger in adopting thoſe which militate againſt authorities of ſo high a kind.

As to the chief of theſe authorities, revelation, the Doctor thinks, when rightly interpreted, it agrees with his theory. I perſuade myſelf, however, that Socinianiſm has not yet met with ſuch countenance among the beſt *ſcripture critics*, as to give his notion on this point much force. And when he would have us think, that his arguments on the whole hold forth *entire conviction*, we perceive the glimpſes of a *ſanguineneſs* and *prepoſſeſſion*, which do not impreſs us with any high notions of his judgment and impartiality. Indeed the world ſeems to owe the appearance of this theory to the ſervice it might chance to be of to certain favourite tenets of religion. There is SYSTEM too much in view; and in delivering a few ſtrictures of this kind, made up of nothing but *opinion*, we preſume we have not greatly wandered from propriety. For the moſt ingenious hypotheſis that has to do with ſo dark a thing as *eſſence*, and which is foſtered by ſo bewitching a nurſe as *prejudice*, may in general be eſteemed little better than OPINION.

In

In the other ſubject of Liberty and Neceſſity, our author is equally refined and adventurous. He takes the Neceſſitarian ſide of the queſtion; and in proportion to the greater degree of plauſibility he thinks he has given to his arguments, he riſes in confidence of their truth. He, in ſhort, eſteems his reaſoning as *demonſtration*, and accordingly challenges the whole world to refute it.

This is a topic which, perhaps, of all others, affords the faireſt opportunity for metaphyſical deception; and our author ſeems to have made the beſt uſe of his principles---I will not ſay for that end, but to eſtabliſh a doctrine, in the fate of which he avows himſelf to be much intereſted. Still, however, *Clarke* and others, who ſupport the freedom of human action, have advanced ſo much and ſo forcibly on their ſide of the queſtion, that no impartial enquirer can ſay that our author's plauſibility is without a rival. And it is moſt likely, that if the main principles he builds his theory upon were accurately examined, they would be found as mere

ſophiſms as ever miſled learning. Perhaps the circumſtances of *following motives in our actions*, and their being *definite* in *definite ſituations*, are ſo far from being criterions of the Neceſſity of the Will (as they are rather *arbitrarily* ſet up) that it would be found they would equally take place, whether the will be *free* or *neceſſary*. But it is not our intent here to enter farther into the diſpute, than to ſuggeſt ſome reaſons why we ſhould be cautious how we adopt the Neceſſitarian tenet, under the preſent circumſtances of its appearance.

We ſee, that though much refinement (if not ſophiſtry) in a myſterious province of human nature, has given great plauſibility to the doctrine of Neceſſity, it is not unoppoſed, by very formidable arguments, in behalf of the doctrine of Liberty. We ſee the partialities of its ſupporter, and that it is a tenet which lies in the arrangement of a novel ſyſtem of religion, which he is labouring to propagate with all his might. *Seeing* this, and *feeling* how much it ſhocks *common ſenſe* to find that man is but a mere machine, whoſe movements are

neceſſarily preſcribed from firſt to laſt; can we admit the Neceſſitarian tenet cordially into our creeds, and reſt *ſatisfied* that metaphyſics yield a ſufficient light in this enquiry? No; rather let the doctrine continue to ſurprize the *muſings* of the learned, as much as it will ever aſtoniſh the *firſt perceptions* of the ignorant; while we ſtill believe *that* notion of the Will to be right, of which we have always had the ſtrongeſt *internal feeling*; which has thus far, ſince the creation of the world, had the *firſt* place in every ſyſtem of morals; which is palpably taught or underſtood in the *ſcriptures*; and without which *common ſenſe* muſt be utterly at a loſs to conceive the meaning of our *common religion*.

To the major part of readers, it is preſumed, ſuch conſiderations as the above would be of uſe, when engaged in the volumes we have had under notice. They are certainly too full of metaphyſical refinement, too hoſtile to the common apprehenſions of mankind, and lead to too ſingular concluſions, to acquit us of ſome undue partiality, if we unreſervedly em-

brace their doctrines. It is true, the learned and ingenious author gives us every proof that he unfeignedly believes them as teaching the truth. He ſays, "it is his "firm perſuaſion, that the three doctrines "of *Materialiſm*, of that which is com-"monly called *Socinianiſm*, and of *Philoſo-"phical Neceſſity*, are equally parts of *one* "ſyſtem; being equally founded on juſt "obſervations of nature, and fair deduc-"tions from the ſcripture *." But it is preſumed we are to attribute this confidence more to the faſcination of *ſyſtem*, than to the real cogency of what he has advanced in ſupport of theſe opinions.

It is natural for an author to be partial to a favourite hypotheſis; but when this partiality is carried to unwarrantable lengths, it is ſuch an impeachment of his *judgment*, as ought to bring its rectitude in queſtion in every thing connected with his theory. Can the author, for inſtance, who does not make a right eſtimate of the force of his *mediums* of proof, be altogether truſted in what he ſays of the *proofs* themſelves? Whatever may be urged in favour of the

* *Diſquiſit.* Vol. I. p. 356.

abilities

abilities and *acumen* of a writer, *rectitude of judgment*, or a happy facility of aſcribing to every argument its due weight, is, in thoſe ſubjects which relate to the conduct of life, the beſt mental qualification he can poſſeſs. In all reaſoning, where there are *oppoſing* arguments, they ſhould be fairly weighed, and *every one* that belongs to the enquiry brought into ſight and properly valued. And were this done on the topics above-mentioned, I am perſuaded there would not appear any juſt grounds for the high tone of confidence with which our author has made his deciſions. This is ſaid on the ſtrength of what we have already obſerved on the ſubject; and the following ſtatement is farther recommended to the conſideration of the reader.

Suppoſe the doctrines of *Materialiſm*, *Neceſſity*, and the *Socinian* interpretation of the ſcripture, had been generally held till now; and that to ſome genius, of our author's inquiſitive caſt, it had occurred, that mere matter, however organized, could not poſſibly think, any more than one of its particles; that the human will is as free as

common

common ſenſe ſuppoſes it; and that what is called the orthodox interpretation of ſcripture, affords the only key to unlock its difficulties—ſuppoſe this, and that the Doctor (as his ſecond) had brought forward the very arguments in proof of theſe tenets that are now adduced, is it not probable that his prejudices and love of ſingularity would have made him to the full as loud in praiſe of their truth and evidence, as he is on the truth and evidence of the oppoſite tenets? I would not argue on the ſubject; but think ſuch a kind of turning the tables as this (in which the *aſſailant* becomes the *aſſailed*) to thoſe who are ſomething verſed in theſe enquiries, and can take an abſtract view of things, may briefly ſhew how little the Doctor's plauſibility in the preſent caſe really makes for his opinions. What notion (as already intimated) however falſe, that was at any time ſupported by ingenious men, but had ſome plauſibility? And what notion is there, however true, that requires much illuſtration, which has not its doubts and difficulties? It is hence that partiality to

ſyſtem

ſyſtem is never without ſome plauſible appearances: it is hence that, in *general*, there is an endleſs warfare between many errors and truths, and in *particular* that ſome men are

"Of nought ſo certain as our *reaſon* ſtill,
"Of nought ſo doubtful as of *ſoul* and *will* *."

We have obſerved in a former Note †, that in our arguments for the truth of revelation, the ſlighteſt ſuperiority, or even *apparent* ſuperiority on its ſide, ought to incline us to believe its authenticity; becauſe we have no other ſpecies of conviction to appeal to but reaſon and opinion. But granting a revelation to exiſt, and that it countenances a tenet on which philoſophy enables us to form conjectures; then it is evident we ſhould be very cautious how we let a *balance*, or *apparent* balance, of this kind of reaſoning influence our opinion againſt what *is*, and moſtly *has been*

* *Dunciad*, B. IV. † Note II.

judged

judged to be, and therefore *may* be, a doctrine of ſacred writ.

The world does not want writers of learning and ingenuity: but it were to be wiſhed, that ſome of their works were accompanied with a more judicious diſplay of them than we now and then find; and alſo that, on whatever topic they treat, they would endeavour to place the reſult of their arguments pretty near its proper point in the ſcale of probability, and neither injure their own reputation, nor their readers minds, with ill-founded boaſts and unſeaſonable confidence. If they write a philoſophic romance for mere amuſement, why let it be called ſo: if they diſcuſs a point of ſpeculation, that may be, after all, either in this or that manner, let it be left in the reader's mind as dubious, probable, improbable, *&c.* juſt as it is really in itſelf.

Such an eſtimate of the value of our argumentative deductions, ſeems now to be one of the moſt deſirable acquiſitions in learning, and in which ſome modern writings greatly fail. But were this ſpecies of

conſiſtency

conſiſtency and moderation kept in ſight, beſides *altering the form* of ſeveral publications, would it not totally *ſuppreſs* ſome others, eſpecially of the kind which abound with *metaphyſical ſyſtem?*

Our author ſays, "worth of character, "and true integrity, and conſequently "God's acceptance, are not neceſſarily "connected with any ſet of opinions *;" and "that, in the fixing of friendſhips, "he does not trouble himſelf about any "man's faith or purſuits in ſome reſpects, "if he be a man to his liking in others †." Now it might here be aſked, how he comes to be ſo much *at enmity with the world at large*, as to moleſt himſelf about its opinions and practices, and be ſo very anxious (as many of his literary labours have proved him to be) to ſet it to rights in matters which he thinks of ſo little conſequence to its future welfare? But to urge reaſons for *ſuppreſſing* books, is like attempting to catch quickſilver under the finger; and it

* *Introd. to Correſp. with Dr. Price*, p. 38.

† *Diſquiſit.* Vol. I. p. 199.

is

is but a *partial*, as well as a hopeleſs argument, which reſts upon men's *inconſiſtency*. To conſider this topic however *generally*, would require more room than we can here allow to diſcuſs it; and a paſſage which occurs in one of our divines (who, though not accounted altogether orthodox, will ever have a kind remembrance by all ſo called, for his *ability*, *modeſty*, and *moderation*) very applicable to the ſubject before us, ſhall cloſe theſe well-meant, and, the writer hopes, *harmleſs* obſervations.

" A *free* and impartial enquiry after " *truth*, wherever it is to be found, is in- " deed a noble and commendable diſpoſi- " tion; a diſpoſition which every man ought " himſelf to labour after, and to the utmoſt " of his power encourage in all others: it " is the great foundation of all uſeful " *knowledge*, all true *virtue*, and of all ſin- " cere *religion*. But when a man, in his " ſearches into the nature of things, finds " his enquiries leading him towards ſuch " notions as, if they ſhould prove true, " would manifeſtly ſubvert the very *eſ-* " *ſences* of *good* and *evil*; the leaſt that a ſober-

" ſober-minded man can in ſuch a caſe " poſſibly be ſuppoſed to owe to *God*, to " *virtue*, to the *dignity of a rational nature*, " is, that he ought to be in the higheſt " degree *fearful* and *ſuſpicious* of himſelf, " leſt he be deceived by any *erroneous ar-* " *gument*, leſt he ſuffer himſelf to be im- " poſed upon by any *wrong inclination*. " Too great an *aſſurance* in arguments of " this nature (even though at preſent they " ſeemed to him to be *demonſtration*) *re-* " *joicing* in the *ſtrength* of them, and taking " *pleaſure* in the *carrying* of ſuch a cauſe, " is what a good mind can never be ca- " pable of. To *ſuch* a perſon, the find- " ing of his *own* arguments *unanſwerable*, " would be the greateſt *grief*; *triumphing* " in ſo melancholy a field, would be the " higheſt *diſſatisfaction*; and nothing could " afford ſo *pleaſing*, ſo agreeable a *diſap-* " *pointment*, as to find his *own reaſonings* " ſhewn to be *inconcluſive*."

CLARKE *againſt* COLLINS.

September, 1782.

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